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Jacques Bénigne Bossuet

By the same Author

Angélique of Port-Royal; Vincent de Paul; Ste. Chantal

JACOBUS BENIGNUS
BOSSUET EPISCOPUS

Jacques Bénigne BOSSUET

A STUDY by E. K. SANDERS

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Introduction

THE most distinguished of French critics and historians, during the last hundred years, have made the personality and work of Bossuet the subject of eager study. So great indeed is the eminence to which he has attained that Shakespeare alone of English writers holds with us a position akin to that which he occupies among his countrymen.* Yet in England, notwithstanding the widespread and increasing appreciation of French literature, a student of Bossuet is a rarity, while a vast number of well-informed persons are content with knowledge summarized in the statement that "he was a great French preacher who behaved very badly to Fénelon." The explanation of this ignorance does not evade inquiry. It lies in the simple admission that he has not awakened interest. Sermons, even though they achieve the rank of classics, are not popular reading, and the writings of Bossuet appear to be inextricably entangled with the controversies of another nation and another age. Moreover, Rigaud's impressive portrait of him at Versailles has helped to remove him to a sphere beyond the ken of ordinary humanity.

If the pompous personage created by tradition were actually Bossuet he might be relegated to a place in the group behind the throne of the Great Monarch and left without regret. Recent admirers of his, however, have had the courage to attack tradition, and by their efforts new truth concerning him is brought to light. Thus a man concealed by legend for two centuries at length emerges. And, having thrust aside the veil of imposing reputation, we find a character full of surprises. Dethrone him from his pedestal, and at close quarters he shows himself to be the tool of contradictory impulses. The saying of Pascal that "men are not so different from each other as one man is from himself" draws support from such a study. Bossuet was an idealist. When he wrote, glorious visions of man's possibilities of holiness inspired his pen; but when he left his desk the

* In the phrase of Sainte-Beuve: "*La gloire de Bossuet est devenue l'une des religions de la France.*"

interests of the world submerged his aspirations. The standards behind his teaching were worthy of a saint, but his relations with his fellow men do not display the marks of sanctity. He gave himself with generous ardour to the fulfilment of an exalted purpose from which he never wavered till he died, yet many of his actions were not exalted. Indeed, it must be said, at once and without flinching, this man with his abnormal genius was not great in personal character, and the varying stages of his history are only scenes in a very familiar spiritual drama. We behold a soul in conflict with the powers of evil and, when at length the end of the long struggle is in sight, there is no triumph in the victory.

He confesses in his sermons to a will that is wayward * and hard to govern, and the same self-revelation may be found in many intimate letters. The picture that is suggested by his own avowal does not accord with the traditional conception of him, but it is more convincing. It may well be that the capacity for vision which raised him to the position of a prophet was no aid in personal conduct. With his gaze fixed on a far horizon he overlooked the problems of each day's experience, and never recognized the influences that mastered him. Of these there is none more important than his devotion to the King. To judge him fairly in a matter which has been the subject of so much criticism we must see him as he was before he had a claim to reputation, a simple-hearted provincial of the middle class, and then consider the effectiveness of the King's presentment of himself before the eyes of his contemporaries. *De loin il étonne, de près il attache* †—in that phrase Bossuet summed up the two stages of his personal relation with his royal master. He was dazzled first, and there are signs that he made a struggle against the fascination so few had power to resist, but his eventual surrender was complete. He hugged his chains. And thereafter, for more than thirty years, his imagination was so dominated by the

* *See* especially sermon preached at Metz ninth Sunday after Whitsun 1653.

† *Discours pour l'Académie Française*. *Œuvres*, vol. xii.

King that it is impossible to picture him apart from the associations of Versailles. All his worldliness sprang from his love of royalty. For him the Court served as a touchstone for the proving of his character—so long as he avoided it his weakness remained hidden. In 1670, when he entered on his duties as tutor to the Dauphin, a keen observer * could write of him that he had no equal in reputation, that gentleness and frank sincerity like his had not been known at Court. It would be useless to seek for a corresponding tribute thirty years later. Yet, while temptation exposed his frailty, it is not clear that his nature suffered deterioration. It was, and it remained, a simple nature, and the anomalies with which his history presents us result from the extraordinary tests to which it was subjected. If he had thought and written in the obscurity of a distant diocese there would be no clue to the personality of the man as distinguished from the writer, and no reasonable ground for the suggestion that his concentration on intellectual labour was maintained at the cost of spiritual development. It was real difficulty, when it confronted him in the life of strenuous activities he had accepted, that brought to light the incoherence in his claim to greatness.

Admiration for his genius (and for the portentous industry which with him was the complement of genius) is enhanced by an endeavour after knowledge of the man himself. At the outset his aim was that of every faithful priest, the conversion of his fellow men and the enlargement of God's kingdom. During the years in Metz and Paris, when preaching was his special avocation, he held this wide and obvious view of the duties of his calling. It was only by degrees that he recognized the summons to labour for reunion as personal to himself. Once this mission was accepted, it filled his life. For one so imbued with the love of souls this was inevitable. To understand his position it is only necessary to regard his simplification of the differences that divided Christendom. To deny the Church, he said, is to deny the Gospel. Belief in the second involves belief in the first.

* Madame de La Fayette : see *Bossuet Correspondance*, vol. i, p. 209.

No one who believes in the Church can remain a Protestant, no one who refuses such belief can remain a Christian.*

Perhaps he paid the penalty of such simplicity when there was need for apprehension of the honest difficulties of other minds. ("*Il nous faut un prophète qui ait vaincu le doute*" is the suggestive comment of M. Bremond.)† To himself, however, unwavering certainty was a treasure beyond price, and his chief ambition was to impart it to all whom he could reach by tongue or pen. He wondered at delay, but he never doubted that eventually the Faith itself would wield converting power over all mankind. Thus, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes must be numbered among those catastrophes that disturbed the fair development of his career. He paid his well-known tribute of admiration ‡ to that act of tyranny because, in his eyes, the will of the King was admirable, but there is abundant proof that his own conviction remained unaltered. And his conviction was directly contrary to the King's policy towards Protestants: his chosen method of approach to them was by conciliation.§ He believed that the world awaited a presentation of the Faith so true and comprehensive that every heretic would see the misery of alienation from the Fold. Resort to persecution || postponed the fulfilment of such a hope to the millennium.

His ardour being that of the idealist his hope remained undaunted, although a life of unremitting effort did nothing towards the fulfilment of his vision. "All else must yield when the Faith is concerned,"¶ he said, and his definition of the Faith was unalterably fixed in every detail. To this fixity he owes his peculiar force as a controversialist. Thus, in the Gallican dispute,

* See *Conférence avec Claude. Œuvres*, vol. xiii.

† *See* Bossuet: *Textes Choisis et Commentés.*

‡ *Oraisons Funèbres: Michel le Tellier.*

§ See *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 28.

|| Victor Hugo presents Bossuet "*chantant le* Te Deum *sur les dragonnades*" (*Les Misérables*, l. i, ch. x), but the evidence is against that view.

¶ *Correspondance*, vol. xi, No. 1879.

so perilous to the Church at large and so vital to himself as an exponent of the Faith, the avoidance of catastrophe may be attributed to his calm discernment. Indeed, if we observe him in relation to this difficult episode it becomes evident that for him a Gallican Question had no existence ; it was only in its detailed application that an unassailable opinion gave legitimate opportunity for argument. Similarly the Quietist teaching, when first presented, did not seem to him to admit discussion. Quietism, as interpreted by Madame Guyon, must be realized, to appreciate the effect of that doctrine on the mind of Bossuet. For Madame Guyon welcomed Protestants into her Companies of the Very Elect without requiring their submission, and she did not disguise her own indifference to the Sacraments.* This is his justification for the wrath that moved him. In his own eyes his wrath was righteous, for this new heresy struck at the root and principle of the Faith. It cannot be emphasized too much that the antagonism which has become so celebrated had no original taint of personal feeling: it was directed towards Madame Guyon's errors. The practice of isolating the quarrel with Fénelon and regarding it as a separate incident is responsible for the severity with which the conduct of Bossuet is judged.† In fact the Quietism controversy and his part in it should be studied as a whole, and placed in their true relation with that purpose which was the reason of his being.

The object of this book is to induce English readers to discover Bossuet for themselves. His writings cover a wide field, and selection from them, according to the instinct of the reader, should not be difficult. They must, however, be read as they were written ; the lyrical quality of his style defies translation. And for knowledge of the man as distinguished from the writer there are the volumes of his *Correspondance*,‡ now almost com-

* Masson: *Fénelon et Madame Guyon*, p. 74, letter xxvii.

† In 1901 appeared a study of Fénelon by the present writer. The judgments formed at that period have been modified by the reading of the intervening twenty years.

‡ *Urbain et Levesque*, 12 vols. (Hachette.)

plete. Hitherto the vision of him as the inspired orator, the triumphant controversialist, has arrested any desire for approach, and his letters have remained unread. In their present form, arranged in accurate sequence, they show him to us under a new guise. Here we surprise him in moments of self-distrust and feebleness and disappointment, and on occasion are admitted to his confidence.

Chapter I. *Schoolboy and Student*

JACQUES BÉNIGNE BOSSUET was born at Dijon September 27, 1627, and baptized the same day at the Church of St. John.* He was the seventh child and fifth son of Bénigne Bossuet and Marguerite Mochet, both of whom belonged to the minor *bourgeoisie* of Burgundy. A draper's shop in the little town of Suerre was kept by a Bossuet for generations,† until the great-grandfather of Jacques Bénigne removed the business to Dijon in 1543, and trained his son to a more exalted and more lucrative position as a lawyer. During the civil warfare of the sixteenth century, when loyalty and personal safety were often incompatible, no taint of treason rested on any of the family. This fact is of interest in connection with the political creed of their great descendant. His vision of monarchy as the system of government designed by the Almighty must have been conceived in a childhood passed among staunch supporters of Church and King, and thus the conviction that had such supreme importance in shaping the thought and action of his later years may be traced to the influence of his original environment.

In 1635 Jacques Bénigne received the tonsure from Sebastien Zamet, Bishop of Langres, and his later boyhood justified the assumption of his vocation for the priesthood. When, three years later, his father left Dijon for Metz, where family interest had secured him a good appointment, Jacques and his favourite brother Antoine remained with their uncle, Claude Bossuet d'Aiserey, to continue their studies at the Jesuit College.‡ Thus Dijon ceased to be his home while he was still a schoolboy, and soon after his father's removal his future prospects were definitely linked to Metz. In December 1640 a canonry in Metz Cathedral was secured for him, and the fact gives an interesting illustration of the ecclesiastical abuses then so prevalent, and the advantage to be derived from them by a shrewd business man § with a

* Floquet: *Études sur la Vie de Bossuet*, vol. i, p. 3. † *Ibid.*, p. 7

‡ Founded 1581 by Jacques and Odinet Godrans, citizens of Dijon.

§ For reputation of Counsellor Bossuet see *Correspondance*, vol. i, appendix iv and notes.

large family. The retention of the appointment seems indeed to have depended on proficiency in the practice of the law, for it was so hotly contested by a rival claimant that the dispute won celebrity in Metz for the name of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet before its bearer had entered on his fourteenth year.*

We have no means of ascertaining the views of the new canon with regard to his preferment, for there are no records of his intimate life during its early stages. Tradition says that he showed himself to be a student from the first moment that the chance of study offered itself, and thereafter was always absorbed in books. We owe to tradition also the dramatic details of his discovery of the Bible, made in his fifteenth year. The studious boy is shown to us approaching a volume that lay open in his uncle's library at Dijon, pausing before it because to him all printed pages held promise of enjoyment, giving a curious glance at one line or another until the spell of Isaiah's solemn poetry fell on him and he became absorbed. Thenceforward all his learning was focussed on his study of the Scriptures.

If the traditional date for this important incident be accurate, it took place a few months before his departure from Dijon. His exceptional talents having convinced his father of his claim to a fuller education than that which President Godrans had provided for the youth of his native city, he was sent to Paris and to the College of Navarre.† This was in October 1642, when he was just fifteen. There was nothing astounding to contemporary opinion in plunging a lad of his age into the dangers of life in Paris ; at fifteen it was customary to assume some of the independence of manhood, and a career might be made or marred before it had run a score of years. In the case of Jacques Bénigne it is likely that his prudent father had assured himself that the venture entailed no risk. He was the fifth son, but he seems to have had opportunities that were not given to any of his brothers; certainly he went alone to Paris,

* Bausset: *Hist. de Bossuet*, liv. i, pt. v.

† Now École Polytechnique, Place Monge.

and he remained there studying for ten years. They were eventful years in the history of France. The death of Cardinal Richelieu was followed by that of Louis XIII. Cardinal Mazarin assumed despotic power, and the Fronde Rebellion expressed the general revolt against his pretensions. No line of diary or letter records the thoughts or experience of the young student, Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, during those troublous times. It was a period when a condition of insignificance had many advantages, and the routine of the universities seems to have been maintained in spite of sieges and civil tumults. In those days Intellect was apt to be on the side of the Court, for the simple reason that revolt against the King implied disorder and neither research nor education can be maintained without stable authority and government. Moreover, the foundation and endowment of a university was most often the result of royal liberality. The time had not yet come when scholars made the plans of revolution, for scholarship in the seventeenth century was associated with the Church, and the interests of Church and Throne alike required the maintenance of order.

Nicolas Cornet,* the head of the college, was orthodox in theology and politics ; " there could not be a truer Frenchman," as his pupil † said of him after his death. His character, as well as his opinions and his learning, fitted him for his post, and for young men who were destined to an ecclesiastical career he was an admirable model. The years at college passed under such direction were peaceful ones for Bossuet in spite of the storms that raged around him. He enjoyed the special favour of Cornet, and may have owed to his constant and close association with a man more than thirty years his senior that solemn view of the conditions of human existence which marked him at this time. He speaks of the " constant and unbroken friendship "‡ existing between them ; it lasted for twenty-one years, but at their first

* *See* Soyez, E.: *Nicolas Cornet : Grand Maître du Collège de Navarre.*

† Bossuet : *Oraisons Funèbres : N. Cornet.*

‡ *Oraisons Funèbres : N. Cornet.*

meeting the master was fifty and the pupil fifteen. It was while he was under this influence, at the age of twenty-two, that he wrote his *Meditation on the Brevity of Life*, which is the earliest example of his work that has survived. Although the morbid tendency of some passages betrays his youth, there is nothing youthful in his valuation of the triumphs of the world, and the work as a whole is astonishingly mature. It was written in Retreat at Langres before his ordination as sub-deacon, when, standing on the threshold of life, he could look forward thoughtfully.*

"I mean to assert myself, to show myself off as others do, and then I must disappear; I see others go before me, others will see me go, these again give place to their successors. . . . My life here will last eighty years at most—even call it a hundred: how much time there has been when I was not! how much when I shall be no longer! How very small a place I hold in the vastness of the years! And the comedy will not be less well played when I go behind the scenes. My part is a very little one, and so unimportant that when I look at it closely it seems to me to be only in a dream that I am here at all, and that everything that surrounds me is pretence, for the fashion of this world passes away.

"My term is eighty years at most, and to reach that how many dangers, how much sickness, must I not go through! How insecure our hold on life from one moment to another! Have I not realized this again and again? I have escaped death on such and such occasions; that is a false statement! I have escaped death? I have avoided a particular danger, but not death! Death prepares many pitfalls for us; if we avoid one we fall into another; in the end she must lay hold upon us. I seem to see a tree at the mercy of the wind; there are leaves falling every moment, some yield quickly, others cling longer. If there are any that escape the storm, the coming of winter will bring them down.

"My term is eighty years at most, and of those eighty

* See *Revue Bossuet*, 1901, p. 108.

years what proportion can be really looked upon as life? Sleep is more death than life. Infancy is merely the life of an animal. How much of my youth has there been which I would wish to cancel, and when I have lived longer how much will there be then? What does it all amount to? What is there that is worth counting? Is it the moment when I have been happy or in which I have won some honour? Such moments are very thinly sprinkled through my life. And what remains to me from innocent enjoyments? Merely an idle memory—and of those which were unworthy only regret and a debt which I must pay in penitence or else in hell.

"Truly we use an apt phrase when we speak of passing our time. We do pass it indeed, and we pass with it. All my being hangs on this moment, that is all that is between me and nothingness; the moment flies—I seize another; they slip by one after another; one after another I link them together trying to have something to which to hold, and I forget that they are taking me with them, and that it is not time itself, but only the time which is mine which is passing by. That is the condition of my life, and it is terrible in this: that, while time passes away from me it remains before God, and I am concerned in it. All that I have depends on the passing of time because I myself depend upon it; but it all belonged to God before it belonged to me, it all depends on God more than on time, time cannot take it from His grasp, it is superior to time in its relation to Him, it endures and is stored in His Treasury. That which I place there I shall find again: the use that I make of time passes through time into eternity. My enjoyment of this pleasure is only for its moments as they pass; when they have passed I must answer for them as if they remained with me. It is useless to say 'They are over, I will think no more of them!' They are over! Yes, they are over for me, but they remain with God. I shall have to answer for them to Him."*

Thus Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, the young student meditating in the silence of Retreat; and in the spirit of

* See *Œuvres Oratoires*, Lebarq, vol. i.

that meditation he entered on the period of self-training and self-repression which followed his university career. The prospect of future priesthood did not debar the students at schools of theology in Paris from amusing themselves, but no legends of youthful escapades are attached to Bossuet's record. Probably the excitements that were a temptation to his contemporaries had no attractions for him, and certainly his youth was distinguished by unvarying discretion and solemnity. His kindred at Metz and Dijon may have rejoiced at his prudent conduct, but to future generations the picture of his years at college would be more pleasing if they contained a hint of boyishness. Instead of the follies and ambitions natural to his age, a sense of the responsibility of life possessed him. The immense conclusions regarding God and the Universe that emerged from his study of theology engrossed him to the exclusion of all else. Fifty years later the Bishop of Meaux, when occasion offered, could treat difficult questions with a lightness of touch that recalled St. François de Sales, but Jacques Bénigne, the student, remained shrouded in a cloak of gravity which hides any of the inclinations or weaknesses of youth.

In those ten years, moreover, there seems to have been no crisis, no moment of awakening or immense decision. We have seen that Bossuet was a Canon of Metz Cathedral when he came to Paris. Ten years later he left Paris for Metz to take up the duties of his office. Other opportunities offered themselves. A congenial life at the College of Navarre and future succession to Nicolas Cornet as its head was open to him,* and if he had remained in Paris his fortune would have been secure. It was characteristic of him that he fulfilled a plan which had been gradually maturing in his mind. The strength of his conviction did not inspire him to any tremendous venture, he never hesitated on the threshold of the cloister, he never resolved—as did Cornet—to refuse the prizes of his calling. Yet, though we may look in vain for a dramatic moment, his vision of the meaning of

* Floquet: *Études*, vol. i, p. 188.

the priest's vocation called him to a form of definite renunciation special to himself : he chose to withdraw into obscurity, that the powers of mind and spirit which he was dedicating should have time to mature in preparation for the claim that might await them. Such a choice made at twenty-five augured well for the future, for already the recognition of his intellectual powers was wide enough to make it clear to him that they were of no common order. In the scholastic world he had won fame in the public examinations that began and ended his career at college ; and, in addition, he had achieved celebrity by his appearance at the Hôtel Rambouillet as the youngest preacher known to society.

The story is a familiar one. One evening, at a gathering of those brilliant and distinguished persons who frequented the Chambre Bleue, one of the intimates of Madame de Rambouillet introduced the young scholar from the College of Navarre as an orator competent, if they desired it, to preach a sermon on any subject chosen for him, without book. The company, always athirst for novelty, welcomed the suggestion. Bossuet, then a lad of sixteen, having claimed a few minutes for preparation, delivered a discourse which won unqualified applause.* This feat was too much of the nature of a drawing-room performance to be creditable, and its celebrity might have aroused all the latent vanity of youth. Fortunately for himself his nature was well balanced, and he seems to have had the judgment of a man where the use of his boyish powers was concerned. While many of his contemporaries were eager to make their voices heard in the pulpits of Paris † long before the course of education prescribed for them had been completed, he showed precocity of a very different kind : in the midst of clamour he could be silent.

It is always difficult to determine the degree to which a young life may be ordered by the advice of the experienced. Bossuet had wise friends, and foremost

* The occasion of the hackneyed mot of Voiture "*Je n'ai jamai entendu prêcher si tôt ni si tard.*"

† *See* Serrant: *L'Abbé de Rancé et Bossuet*, p. 13.

among them stood Cospéan, Bishop of Lisieux,* a notable scholar and preacher, whose favour with the Queen earned him the enmity of Mazarin. The veteran priest discerned the great promise of the young Burgundian, and warned him that learning and reflection rather than constant practice were the best preparation for a preacher.† Cospéan belonged to the inner circle of the Hôtel Rambouillet, and was so experienced in men and manners ‡ that it was in itself a compliment that he should give counsel to an unfledged youth. Bossuet obeyed him ; the chances of immediate notice and success were put aside, and when the time came for choice, and the student period was over, he had the courage to turn his back on Paris. Four years earlier, in May 1648, having attained the prescribed age of twenty-one, Bossuet had visited Metz to make formal assertion of his position as a canon, and in the following autumn he was ordained sub-deacon by Zamet, Bishop of Langres. A year later, in the Cathedral at Metz, he was ordained deacon.

Clerk's orders, involving the tonsure, were a necessary preliminary to ecclesiastical preferment, and were received by many youths who had no semblance of vocation. It was possible to draw a large income from the endowment of a cathedral or a monastery, even to hold the rank of bishop or of cardinal without being committed further. But some of the recipients of the prizes of Church patronage were not content with a titular appointment ; they desired the full state and power of their office, and to them any delay in attaining the full privilege of priesthood was irksome. Therefore it was a recognized practice at this period to confer the three degrees of ordination at the same time.§ Vincent de Paul strove to inculcate a general recognition of the sacredness of Holy Orders, but his teaching was regarded as an innovation and was only accepted by a minority. The younger sons of noble

* "*Il était le Saint de la Cour*" : Madame de Motteville (*Mém.*, vol. i, p. 203).

† Floquet: *Études*, vol. i, p. 101 ; and Lebarq: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 2.

‡ See Tallemant des Réaux: *Historiettes*, vol. ii, No. 130.

§ Serrant: *op. cit.*, p. 16.

families still assumed the mysterious responsibilities of priesthood, and therewith the wealth of bishopric or abbey, hastily and without any scruple regarding their qualification for their charge. Jacques Bénigne Bossuet was not the scion of a noble family, and neither his opportunities nor his temptations were as great as those of his well-born comrades, but the slowness of his progression may be attributed to a deeper cause than the accident of birth. His successive ordinations each marked a definite stage in advance towards the goal to which his course was directed. In March 1652 he was ordained priest, and when, ten years later, in the Church of the Oratorians, he described the solemnity of ordination he did so in terms which were not representative of contemporary opinion.

"To prepare for the priesthood," he said, "is not, as many people seem to think, an undertaking that can be accomplished in a few days, it is the employment of a lifetime. It does not mean the repudiation of sin by a sudden effort of the will, but a persistent habit of resisting it. Devotion must not have the fervour that springs from novelty, but that which has been confirmed and deepened by long custom. St. Gregory Nazianzen said of St. Basil that 'he was a priest before he was made a priest,' which means, if I am not mistaken, that without waiting for the mystic consecration he had from his childhood consecrated himself by the untiring practice of piety."*

There is every reason to believe that Bossuet had been preparing since his childhood for the day when he should be made a priest, and at its near approach he withdrew to St. Lazare for the Retreat which M. Vincent had succeeded in making customary before ordination in the diocese of Paris. In that ten days of undistracted quiet there was opportunity for looking back, for recognizing the mistakes and failures of the first period of youth, and for surveying the possibilities of the future. Gondi —future Cardinal de Retz—had emerged from a similar Retreat resolved on the choice of evil; to Rancé, the

* *Oraisons Funèbres: Père François Bourgoing,* December 1662.

future Trappist, it meant only the deepening of his revolt against the state of life to which he was committed. On neither of these two did association with St. Vincent and his company have an elevating influence, but to both their sojourn at St. Lazare meant the deliberate facing of reality ; they could not plead that they had drifted into misuse of the high calling they had accepted ; they had seen and considered its claim upon them—and had refused it.

Bossuet had no new considerations awaiting him in his Retreat ; circumstances had combined with desire to make his vocation unquestionable. He brought great powers and strong purpose to its fulfilment, and the day of his ordination to the priesthood was the greatest landmark in his life. His future prospects were by no means assured, however. He was resolved to be the faithful servant and defender of the Church, but wide opportunities of service were, ordinarily, obtained by family interest, and Jacques Bénigne Bossuet was not secure of full scope for his great powers because the name he bore was incurably plebeian.

To the inhabitants of Metz the subject of family interest and misused patronage in the Church was a burning question. For forty-seven years Verneuil, the natural son of Henri IV, enjoyed the revenues of their bishopric, but, as he never received even deacon's orders, he could not exercise full episcopal authority, and discipline, particularly in the Cathedral Chapter, was difficult to maintain. The position was further complicated by an attempt to transfer the title and revenues to Cardinal Mazarin, an arrangement which the Pope refused to ratify, and M. de Verneuil remained bishop until 1659, when he resigned. A few years later he astonished society by his marriage with the widowed Duchesse de Sully.* The system of using ecclesiastical revenues to reward those who found favour with the King or his First Minister was too firmly established to be a cause of scandal, but it was hard to reconcile with those high standards which were cherished by the disciples of

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 1, *note*.

Vincent de Paul. And here, at the opening of his career, we find Bossuet confronted with the necessity of choice between the claims of traditional loyalty and of his own conscience. He was shrewd enough to know that Verneuil represented an evil which was more destructive to the Church than any Protestant machinations. Nominally Verneuil was his bishop, it is true ; nevertheless, it is matter for regret that he addressed to him an essay, composed at the College of Navarre, with a complimentary Latin dedication as respectful as if it were offered to a veritable Father in God.* The custom of the time is his excuse. Verneuil showed his appreciation of the compliment promptly by conferring the Archdeaconry of Sarrebourg on the young canon, and preferment to the Archdeaconry of Metz itself followed two years later.†

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 1, July 5, 1651.
† Floquet: *Études*, p. 372.

Chapter II. *A Priest's Apprenticeship*

BOSSUET began his work as a preacher as soon as he was established in residence at Metz. If it is the case that he intended this early period of his career to be a time of definite preparation his surroundings had many points that were favourable to his design. A contemporary chronicle * tells us quaintly that "Metz was an important place with its own *Parlement*, where the ladies were more cultivated and agreeable than in any other provincial town." Probably this is not unprejudiced testimony, but it suggests that there was capacity for intellectual response in the audience before whom the young abbé was to test and mould his powers of oratory. And, besides the legal and commercial element, there was an occasional reminder of the Court in the cathedral congregations. Marshal Schomberg was Governor of the province and made Metz his home, and he had married Marie de Hautefort,† whose experience as a lady-in-waiting was peculiarly rich in adventure and romance. She had passed from the service of Marie de' Medici to that of Anne of Austria ; she had been the object of the passionate attachment of Louis XIII ; she had served her royal mistress, in her years of distress as the neglected Consort, with unswerving self-devotion ; and she had admonished her, when her liberty as Regent had led her into licence, with no less courage. She had been exiled, first as the victim of the jealousy of Cardinal Richelieu, and again for her opposition to Mazarin, and throughout she preserved her reputation quite unsullied. The dramatic career of Madame de Schomberg was a matter of common knowledge, and Bossuet, though he became the declared enemy of the drama, had the dramatic instinct sharply developed : we see it in his *Oraisons Funèbres*, in many sermons, in many letters, and in his work as an historian ; therefore he must have welcomed his opportunities of intercourse with this great lady. Indeed, to

* Quoted Victor Cousin : *Madame de Chevreuse et Madame de Hautefort*, vol. ii, p. 229.

† *See* Levesque de Burigny : *Vie de Bossuet*, p. 24.

a student of human nature few subjects could offer greater interest, for she had every reason for disillusion and yet was not disillusioned; she had proved the hollowness of royal favour, yet could not renounce her desire for it.* Also she was intimate with that devout world whose place as an influence on the conduct and on the politics of the day is so hard to define and so impossible to deny. As the Queen's companion she had been familiar with Val de Grâce ; for her own consolation she was a constant guest at the Visitation Convent close to it ; and her husband's sister was Madame de Liancourt, at whose house † she had associated with the adherents of Port Royal.

Bossuet's experience as a student in Paris cannot have left him in ignorance of the significance of these celebrated convents. The scheming that went on within their walls ‡ may have been prompted by high motives, but it gave ample justification for the suspicion that they were a danger to the ruling powers of the moment ; there are many proofs of the real spiritual life in the background, but contemplative and intrigante knelt side by side in choir stalls, and to describe a Carmelite as " standing in high favour with the Queen " § suggested no contradiction in idea. Possibly the whisper of conspiracy increased the glamour which the convents of that period undoubtedly possessed, and their appeal to popular imagination attracted within their precincts many who would have been repelled by the Religious Life in its true aspect. The net was wide enough to sweep outsiders of very diverse types into the vast chapels of Val de Grâce and of the Visitation in the Rue St. Jacques, and preachers invited to these pulpits had a great opportunity. Bossuet was to distinguish himself particularly by the use he made of such openings when his years of apprenticeship were over, and his intercourse with

* Madame de Motteville: *Mémoires*, vol. i, p. 507.

† Rapin: *Mémoires*, vol. i, p. 99.

‡ Louis XIV referred in public to the Carmelites of Rue du Bouloi as " des intrigueuses." (*See* Madame de Sévigné, vol. v, No. 663.)

§ Rapin: *Mémoires*, vol. i, book i, p. 161.

Madame de Schomberg was calculated to enlighten him on the possibilities of evangelization accorded by the organization of the convents. It is evident that he stood in considerable awe of the Governor * and his distinguished lady. They were great people, and their benevolence to him, from which he derived a social standing not otherwise attainable,† made their natural claims on outward manifestation of respect more insistent. Yet he was not lavish in his use of pulpit adulation ; they made their appearance unexpectedly when he was about to preach on St. Gorgon ‡ in the Cathedral at Metz, and he improvised the complimentary phrases which the elaborate custom of the time demanded ; § but when he had proved that his wits did not fail him in an emergency he put aside the language of compliment and proceeded to balance flattery with solemn exhortation. On another occasion, when he had paid his tribute from the pulpit to the virtue and good works of Madame de Schomberg, he summoned courage to warn her that all the admiration of which she was the object was ill-bestowed unless she was grounding all she did upon humility.¶

Even at that early stage there were omens of the struggle that later was destructive to inward self-complacency or calm. He desired to conform to the wishes of the world, to be liked by those with whom he associated ; yet at all times, even in those moments still far distant when the pride of life seemed to have mastered him, he hated worldliness and battled with it. The society of the Schombergs could not be said to represent, even to a young priest, the temptations of the world ; they were both far too exemplary in faith and conduct to be classed as worldlings, nor was there experience to be gained from intimacy with Marie de Hautefort that could aid him in future intercourse with the more typical

* The earliest published work of Bossuet was dedicated to Schomberg. See *Œuvres*, vol. xiii, "*Réfutation du Catéchisme de Ferry*" *chez Jean Antoine à Metz.*

† Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 25. ‡ *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 315.

§ Victor Cousin: *op. cit.*, appendix, p. 497.

¶ *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 167.

ladies of the Court. His friendship with her in these early scenes is important, nevertheless, for it shows that there was already developed in him that power of understanding and of suggestion which made him the ideal consoler of Henrietta of England on her deathbed, and the prop and stay of Louise de La Vallière in her great decision. Schomberg died in Paris in 1656, and a letter * from Bossuet to Marie de Hautefort in her third year of widowhood is the first evidence of his capacity for personal dealing with troubled souls. The worst pain of her bereavement was her constant apprehension as to the future state of the being she had loved. This distress assumed terrible proportions from time to time, and it is supposed that Bossuet was urged to write to her by a third person, probably Alix Clerginet, foundress of the Institute for the Propagation of the Faith in Metz. The letter is a long one, and is free from platitudes of condolence or of compliment ; it is written with the confidence of one who knows his correspondent intimately and respects character as well as rank in her. The grief with which he is dealing is not selfish, it is rooted in the depths of absorbing human love, but it indicates disorder of mind and failure to grasp an essential part of Catholic teaching. Schomberg's conversion had taken place long before his last illness ; he had been known in Metz for his devout practices (we are told that he fasted during one Lent on the coarser kind of bread),† he lived strictly, and died with the consolation of the Sacraments. " We should not pity the dead under such conditions," says Bossuet, " we do them wrong in calling them the dead. His end, madame, was that of one of the predestined. He saw Death coming towards him, he felt it approaching step by step ; with that knowledge he made Communion and took stock of the vanished years."

To mourn as one without hope over such a bereavement as this is heresy, but Bossuet understood that it was

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 13.

† *Vie inédite de Marie de Hautefort*, quoted Victor Cousin: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 233.

not theological argument or priestly admonition that would lessen the terrors that oppressed the mourner, but rather sympathy and the tenderest persuasion. Marie de Hautefort was set apart from the other well-known women of her time : all that she said and did proclaimed her absolute integrity, and that quality had become rare under the rule of Richelieu and of Mazarin. Indeed, she owed her celebrity as much to popular esteem for her real worth as to the importance of her part in the drama that had the Court for stage. Bossuet's letter was worthy of its recipient, and her desire for it proves that already social barriers were breaking down before him. We know that she regained her mental balance eventually, and was able to assist and comfort the Queen-mother, her former friend and mistress, in the miseries of her last illness ; * and we can conjecture that it was Bossuet who helped her through the perils of depression until her faith returned.

The daily life of the young abbé at Metz, however, was not greatly affected by his association with celebrated personages, and it has no history. He was sincere in his acceptance of retirement, and he set an example of quiet regularity to the turbulent ecclesiastics of the Cathedral Chapter. There were many new experiences awaiting him in Metz, for the frontier city had a character of its own. He was not a stranger there, however, and he had the temperament that readily adapts itself to any surroundings. Consequently his position as a citizen was assured before he had been many months in residence, and in a year it had become a very important one. In the miserable necessity of treating with Condé, who was fighting for Spain against his own country, Bossuet was the envoy of the people of Metz † for the arrangement of the subsidy which was demanded as the price of their security. Here he had his first opportunity of showing skill as a diplomatist, and he acquitted himself admirably and won the gratitude of the townsfolk. It is possible that he found the small adventure of passing the frontier

* *Vie inédite : op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 239.

† *Correspondance*, vol. i, Nos. 3 and 4 and notes.

and treating with the enemy a welcome change from the routine he had adopted, for he was at this time twenty-six, an age at which outward monotony, however useful in itself, cannot be welcome. His preaching made the most important of all the claims upon his time, however, because the study and consideration connected with it involved far more than the act of pronouncing sermons from the pulpit. The art of preaching, as Bossuet regarded it, involved an endeavour towards the understanding of men and women, their interests and beliefs, and the influences of the moment and of the locality that most affected them. It was not merely a student and doctor of theology who confronted the people of Metz in the cathedral pulpit ; it was a young and ardent human being, consumed, then and throughout the periods of his public ministration, by a passion for the conversion of souls. With that aim always in view, no point of experience in his round of duties was wasted on him, and for four years he was content gradually to gather knowledge, to reflect, to gain facility in the use of his great gift, without seeking recognition outside the narrow circle of his fellow-citizens.

In September 1657 the door through which ultimately the Abbé Bossuet was to pass to a position of distinction was unfastened. Affairs of State brought the Queen Regent, the King, Mazarin, and all their following to Metz.* On October 15 the Regent, as befitted a devout Spaniard, repaired to the cathedral for the panegyric of St. Teresa.† It was an opportunity which was seized upon by Bossuet for the benefit of his flock rather than for the service of his own ambition. The needs of the diocese were great, and the abuses to which we have already referred increased the difficulty of preserving the faith of Catholics in the midst of a multitude of Jews and heretics. It was only after the death of Mazarin that her enterprises in connection with charity, and with the Church, became the chief interest in the life of Anne of Austria ; at this period there were many conflicting

* Floquet: *Études*, vol. i, p. 425.

† *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 382.

claims on her attention, and there was every reason to expect that the needs of Metz, skilfully though they had been presented, would be forgotten when she returned to Paris. It chanced, however, that benevolent impulses possessed her for so long that Vincent de Paul had been commissioned to organize a Mission at Metz before they had subsided. Bossuet was known at St. Lazare, and belonged to the society that met there for the celebrated "Tuesday Conferences," * and when the announcement of the Queen's intention was made to him he seized with alacrity upon the chance of personal communication with M. Vincent.

The Mission was to be held in the Lent of 1658 by twenty priests belonging to the "Conferences," under direction of the Lazarists, and the leader chosen by M. Vincent was Chandenier, Abbé de Tournus, a man of recognized power and great saintliness.† It was an important enterprise, and Bossuet threw himself wholeheartedly into the work of organization. M. Vincent was supremely the apostle of Order; his work was done directly in the service of God and nothing in it was left to chance; it was the key to the success of his vast undertakings that he considered and regulated every detail of the original scheme with infinite care, and the letters written to him by Bossuet, in capacity of agent for St. Lazare at Metz, reflect the spirit that he strove to inculcate. For the secular priest, in his practical as well as in his spiritual life, there was no better guide and example than M. Vincent, but there were very many who came in touch with him and went upon their way unaffected. Bossuet was not of these, however; his business letters are full of trembling respect, and there is a development in the formality of their conclusion which is suggestive. The first bears, after the signature, the pompous designation "Archdeacon of Metz," the second "unworthy priest." ‡ The manifold occupations of M. Vincent never affected his capacity for observation, and the young

* *Revue Bossuet*, October 1907.

† Abelly: *Vie de Vincent de Paul* (1664), liv. i, p. 242.

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. i, Nos. 6 and 7.

and brilliant abbé, who had already made his mark among the members of the Conferences, was no stranger to him, therefore he must have been fully alive to the significance of those differing signatures and perhaps allowed himself to smile at them. But the smile of M. Vincent was innocent of mockery.

There were a vast number of uninteresting arrangements to be made before the spiritual work of the Mission came in sight : difficulties of lodging, of commissariat, of service. It was not an easy task to provide for more than twenty visitors, but that toil was as nothing beside the effort which was needed to still the jealousies and evil rumours that threatened to wreck the enterprise completely. The Suffragan was perpetually at variance with the Cathedral Chapter,* and the announcement that he had given his warm approval to M. Vincent's scheme secured for it the opposition of the resident ecclesiastics. And there was a popular Dominican preacher who had already been engaged for Lent, and resented the suggestion that he was no longer needed.† It was good training and good discipline to deal with these obstacles, and by the time he had overcome them Bossuet had made no inconsiderable addition to his capital of experience. It was his duty also to prepare the people for the great opportunity offered to them, and he approached this spiritual side of his task with real humility.

" I know my own incapacity to give the help I wish to give," he wrote to M. Vincent,‡ and his remarkable success in dealing with the jealousies and contentions of his neighbours may be attributed to his own effort towards self-effacement. M. Vincent was the real leader of the Mission at Metz, although there was no thought of his actual appearance there, and the young abbé, burdened with the care of the multifarious preliminaries, turned constantly towards him, and from him drew inspiration to humility. When the Missioners arrived Bossuet himself took over a little church upon the ramparts, and

* For details *see* Maynard: *Vie de St. Vincent de Paul*, vol. ii, p. 92.
† *Correspondance*, vol. i, appendix iii, p. 422.
‡ *Ibid.*, No. 6.

withdrew into the background. Two months later, when they left for Paris, his letter to M. Vincent expresses the thanks of one who has witnessed with admiration the work done by others, and refers to himself as though his own association with the Missioners was an honour to which he could not reasonably have aspired.*

This Mission at Metz was generally regarded as extraordinarily fruitful ; M. Vincent himself referred to it with thankfulness ; it woke Catholics from spiritual slumber and disturbed the peace of the Huguenots and of the Jews. Moreover, it reached further than the limits of a Mission to the people and touched their pastors, thereby fulfilling a constant aspiration of the Superior of St. Lazare. The reality of the impression is proved by the formation of a society instituted by the priests of Metz and the surrounding districts, whose object was the continuance of Conferences and Mission work. Undoubtedly the personal labours of Bossuet had been instrumental in bringing all this about. At every stage his influence in the city, and his familiarity with the various aspects of its life, were valuable, and, in addition, there had been opportunity for his natural gifts to make their mark. Chandenier had not been too much engrossed with the responsibility of leadership to note the powers of this young recruit. He was himself a man whom others held in reverence, he was of high birth (which meant much to the position of a priest in those days), and he had been chief in this great spiritual venture of which the devout world was chattering, but he felt that the service rendered by the Abbé Bossuet deserved greater recompense than thanks from him. The documents relating to the Mission at Metz, preserved at St. Lazare, included the letter in which he asked that M. Vincent himself should write congratulations to Bossuet on his preaching and instructions.†

" What is there that is worth counting ? Is it the moment in which I have been happy or have won some honour ? Such moments are very thinly sprinkled

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 11.

† *Ibid.*, p. 29, note 5.

through my life." So runs the meditation in Retreat six years earlier. But already the writer was discovering that life offered privileges which brought neither happiness nor triumph in their train, and these had not been considered in his reckoning. Of such privileges was his work in the Mission at Metz. The generous impulse of the Queen Regent, to which the Mission owed its being, had been evolved by his eloquence ; his skill and energy had so smoothed the way that the Missioners entered on their labours undistracted ; moreover, in his association with the enterprise he had himself received real spiritual benefit. Here, in truth, he had reached not merely the moment, but the period in his life that was worth counting, and it had not the evanescence which his youthful pessimism ascribed to all human achievements and desires. Indeed, his connection with the Mission had important effect on the development of his career ; he seems by means of it to have found his foothold. The spring of 1658 was the end of his retirement.

Chapter III. *Bossuet in Paris*

AFTER the year of the Mission Bossuet's life no longer centred at Metz ; his work was waiting for him in Paris, and the links which bound him to the scene of his first labours had to be loosened. These links were strong, for all the fervour of his nature had been thrown into the opening of his ministry. Metz was not merely the arena in which he fought his earliest battles with the champions of the hosts of Reform ; it was the testing-place for his capacities in intimate spiritual guidance. His admirers in labelling him theologian and controversialist have injured him ; the veneration accorded to him by the wise and learned is not more than his due, but his stupendous intellectual achievement has been emphasized to the detriment of his other important qualifications as a priest. If we look for it there is abundant proof that Bossuet was a man of prayer, and in his mind the life of a priest was a united whole: there were no departments—of study, of preaching, and of social intercourse—to be adjusted to their right proportions. An idea of unity was always present to him, and the fact that a priest was worthy to mount into the pulpit implied his fitness to minister at the altar. Both acts alike, as he regarded them, assumed the possession of a power which was a trust from God, and for both prayer was essential ; a priest neglecting prayer deprived himself of the force by which alone all the other activities that belonged to his vocation could be sustained. Perhaps a vivid intellect is not an unmixed blessing to a man who has to deal with others, for it is hard to preserve unbroken charity towards those whose dragging minds refuse the sequence of clear reasoning, and in Bossuet's case a subconscious instinct of impatience withheld him from emphasizing that which appeared to him to be self-evident. The value that he set on prayer, for instance, or his sense of its necessity in his personal life, is rarely stated, although his later teaching shows that he knew more of the science of prayer than can be learned by study.

There is, however, one record of his first year's

ministry which gives us a little knowledge of the progress of his spiritual development. When he settled at Metz there was living in the city a woman named Alix Clerginet, whose efforts towards winning the daughters of the Jewish population to Christianity had had remarkable success. Her original plan was to receive her converts into her own house, but she was in humble circumstances, and the money necessary for the institution known as La Maison de la Propagation de la Foi, of which she was the foundress, was subscribed by charitable persons headed by Madame de Schomberg. The enterprise made particular appeal to the sympathy of Bossuet ; he became Superior, and its rule in its final form was drawn up by him.* His personal association with its foundress, however, has a much more important bearing on his life than his connection with its work, for there seems sufficient evidence to establish the identity of Alix Clerginet and " The Lady dwelling in Metz " to whom Bossuet wrote letters of direction.† The lady in question was, clearly, not a member of a religious Order, yet she was so far advanced in the spiritual life that the young abbé could write to her freely as to one who will meet him with understanding. Caution would have forbidden many expressions in the letters ‡ had they been addressed to a neophyte or to a stranger, but he is sure of his ground, and he allows his pen to run freely into revelation of his thought.

" My dear daughter, it is necessary that you should have a vehement desire to love Jesus Christ. This desire possessed me all day yesterday, and I am eager to write something about it to you. The desire to love Jesus Christ is the beginning of that holy love which opens and expands the heart that it may abandon itself to Him without reserve, completely—to self-annihilation —so as to have no being apart from Him.

" Whoever loves Jesus Christ is always beginning over again ; he regards all he has done hitherto as of no ac-

* *Œuvres*, vol. xvii, p. 285.
† *Revue Bossuet*, 1904 (July).
‡ *Correspondance*, vol. i, Nos. 14, 15, 16, 17.

count—this is why he is always in a state of desire, and it is this continual desire that makes love infinite. When love has made—if such a thing were possible—its very last effort, it is with its final moments that it wishes to begin again ; and so it can never cease to call upon desire to support it, because desire is always beginning and never ends, and will not suffer itself to be limited. The first condition for a heart that desires to love is the fixed admiration with which it regards its object, and that is the first wound that pure love makes in the heart. The heart that is seized and possessed by this holy admiration can see nothing that is not Jesus Christ, can endure nothing that is not Jesus Christ. There is no greatness for him except Jesus Christ, and his admiration so surges up within him that he is forced to exclaim ' The Lord is Great,' *Magnus Dominus*. When this point is reached, little by little he loses sight of everything else. If anything else shows itself, either it repels him or else he says ' That is beautiful but it has no part with my well-beloved.' And from that springs a fierce desire to break away every bond, however slight, that binds the heart so that it cannot lose itself in Jesus Christ ; and this is what is meant by the desire of love."

This is the mysticism of the scholar. The Saints as well as the Fathers, evidently, had had their place in the course of study undertaken during those years at Metz.* The seed, moreover, had fallen upon fertile soil, and Bossuet did not overrate the value of the fruit of his own meditation in judging it worthy to be communicated to a responsive soul. Indeed, a glimpse of the knowledge that may not be gleaned from books had been vouchsafed to him, there is the note of discovery, and it becomes more resonant in another letter a few days later. His theme (for the moment he has no other) is still the love of Jesus.

" There—in loving Jesus—an immense love of other souls is born, and thought of self should have no place

* M. Bremond suggests that his knowledge was drawn from contemporary devotional writers, such as Surin and Boudon (*Bossuet*, vol. i, p. 112, *note*), but M. Bremond is the apologist of Fénelon.

save in relation to the boundless love that we desire to have for all souls in general and each in particular. O Jesus, by Thy bitter thirst upon the Cross give me the grace of a true thirst for souls, the grace to prize my own only by the claim upon it to have regard for others. I desire to love them all because they are all capable of loving Thee, because this capacity has been given to them by Thee, and because it is from Thee that the call comes to them to turn to Thee and concentrate all their power of love upon Thee only. Therefore, O Jesus, I cannot rest while any soul is left without knowledge of Thy love."

This is mysticism applied to the daily life of persons whose vocation—like that of Bossuet and his correspondent—involved the instruction of others, and the dangers of its study (of which every honest student of the subject is aware) slip out of sight. It is the mysticism which his eager mind could grasp—a stimulus to activity. Indeed, from that day of Retreat just before Ascensiontide, when the young priest discovered for himself the meaning of the written words which Juan d'Avila and Louis de Léon and St. Teresa had left behind them, and the " ardent longing " for the love of Jesus ceased to be a phrase, there came to him fresh inspiration for the evangelistic work which was to be his part. He was receiving many calls to Paris,* and he knew probably that thenceforward his days would be passed in the midst of controversy and effort and perpetual distraction ; it may be he was shrinking from the prospect, and it was on the threshold of this new condition that he experienced " the first wound that pure love makes in the heart." The outpouring of his soul under that joyful suffering suggests that the cell of the contemplative is drawing him, but that first fervour was rapidly assimilated with his long-established purpose.

This revelation of his inner self acquires peculiar interest from the circumstances under which he made it.

* He is accused of being actuated by motives of self-interest in leaving Metz. For examination of this charge *see* M. Rébelliau in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15, 1919.

Before him lay Paris, and Paris was the home of a vast multitude of whom a very small proportion desired that their world should be conformed to the law of Christ. That thought filled his mind as he faced the future, because he held a commission to conquer souls, and the chief motive of his life in those days was his absorbing faith in that commission. Moreover, in his new revelation of the love of Jesus there had come to him a new capacity. In his own words: "There—in loving Jesus—an immense love of other souls is born. I cannot rest while any soul is left without knowledge of Thy love." Aspiration, soaring beyond possibility of fulfilment, was the best stimulus for the evangelistic labour on which he was embarking. And he never lost the faculty of aspiration through the long years of his pilgrimage. The course that lay before him was not to be a steady upward progress ; far from it—yet in following it he followed his vocation. There were times when temptation pressed upon him and the world passed severe judgment on his failures, yet his purpose never faltered. However strong the desires that personal ambition prompted, they were all subservient to that one with which he entered on his life-work, the desire to win souls for the Church.

A direct result of the Mission at Metz was an invitation from the Superior of St. Lazare to the Abbé Bossuet to conduct the Ordination Retreat at Easter 1659.* It is memorable that Bossuet began his career as a preacher in Paris under the auspices of Vincent de Paul, and that his earlier sermons were not addressed to fashionable audiences, but to inmates of charitable institutions, to converted heretics, or to the more secluded of the religious Communities. This should exonerate him from any charge of being drawn to Paris by ambition, although it is likely that other motives moved him to his venture † besides his thirst for souls. The man who could achieve such close analysis of human passions as may be found in many of his sermons must

* Floquet: *Études*, vol. ii, p. 14.

† Jovy, E.: *Études et Recherches*, p. 67.

have been well aware of the temptations likely to assail himself. It is interesting to observe the pitiless minuteness with which the succeeding stages of ambition are set forth in his panegyric of St. François de Sales,* and his warning is directed especially to ecclesiastics, and therefore to himself. If we consider his condition and prospects, the temptation to push himself and win recognition becomes evident. According to the traditions of the time, by which an inherited claim to high place was the only valid one, his birth was a hindrance to advancement so great as to be almost insuperable. Yet his powers were not of a kind to come to full fruition in obscurity and, while it was possible for him to be conscious of this and yet to remain humble, the prompting of ambition in its most specious form was inevitable. In following his career we shall find that external achievements brought in their train interior failures, and that he fell most heavily when he was most secure that his ardour was solely for the service of the Church.

When he came to Paris Bossuet took up his abode at the Doyenné du Louvre.† The churches of St. Thomas and St. Nicolas du Louvre were surrounded by the dwellings of great families, among them the Hôtel Rambouillet, the Hôtel de Chevreuse and the Hôtel de Longueville, in the district between the Louvre and the Rue St. Honoré.‡ A little circle of his former comrades at the College of Navarre was established at the Doyenné, each one of whom had been touched by the influence of M. Vincent, and for such work as lay before him there could not have been a more desirable background. At first he was only clear of his object, he could not foresee the method of accomplishment. From the whirlpool of Paris life he desired to rescue souls, but it is unlikely that during his student years he had reached any distinct comprehension of the social conditions with which he would have to deal in the pursuit of his endeavour. Attempts to depict these social con-

* *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 70.

† Floquet: *Études*, vol. ii, p. 28.

‡ The actual site is part of the present Place du Carrousel.

ditions of the reign of Louis XIV have been made many times, but never with real success, because the mind cannot grasp, as a connected whole, so diverse a medley of contrasting types, or conceive with any clearness the result on individual temperaments of that artificial code of thought and practice which—as we shall see—the King was imposing on the minds and consciences of his subjects.

It would seem that human nature, in revenge against this false coercion, asserted its independence with extraordinary vigour in every sphere that was immune from the King's authority. As if to counterbalance the effect of the perverted standards which the pomp and circumstance of kingship imposed upon opinion, men and women of all ranks gave constant proof that they recognized the prevailing influence of the supernatural. The supernatural in this connection must not, of course, be confounded with the spiritual. Yet the constant manifestations of popular credulity in its most degraded form * bore testimony to the realization of an unseen kingdom, even though that kingdom was an evil one. It was of great importance to a preacher that he should realize, as a component part of the material with which he had to deal, this capacity for revolt against the actual, but its realization must have been difficult to Bossuet. Many years afterwards Antoine Arnauld commented on "the depth of sincerity and of judgment"† which was part of his mental endowment, and the bias of his mind at all times was on the side of clearness and simplicity of thought. To him therefore more than to others the inconsequence and contradiction that characterized the process of thinking in so many minds was baffling. The instances of inconsistency which his generation produced can hardly be surpassed. Among his contemporaries—to take one instance of many—was the celebrated sorceress and poisoner, La Voisin, whose influence in all grades of society was vast beyond all reckoning.

* *See* Colbert: *Lettres*, vol. vi, appendix xx, *Mémoire de l'avocat Duplessis*.

† Arnauld, A.: *Lettres*, vol. vii, p. 370.

This woman, at a time when daily she was perpetrating the most atrocious crimes, believed in the efficacy of prayer, and considered that a novena strictly kept in the chapel of Ste. Ursule at Montmartre was more likely to obtain the restoration of peace in a divided household than any potions or incantations.* And, at the other end of the social scale, there was Madame de Montespan with her rigid adherence to the Rule of the Church regarding Fast-days † at a time when the burden of flagrant and notorious sin upon her conscience made additions of this nature appear of negligible importance. Innate in them both there was an instinct of reverence which, though its expression may seem to travesty devotion, was not entirely unreal. La Voisin is supposed to have made a good end though she died upon the scaffold, and Madame de Montespan devoted the last years of her life to rigorous practices of penitence.‡ Manifestations of the same confusion of thought were rife among all the social grades when Bossuet began his work in Paris. Reliance on the pronouncements of soothsayers, on charms, and on the grossest forms of sorcery did not indicate an irremediable stage of mental perversion, but rather a condition of mind which, if carefully treated, would be as receptive to the teaching of the Faith as to the suggestions of the Devil. Here, then, was the great opportunity for the preacher; but in proportion to the greatness of the opportunity was the difficulty of the task.

Bossuet could draw upon his experience at Metz for those commissions which came to him through M. Vincent. The untrained mind in Paris might be more corrupt than that with which he was familiar in the provinces, but it could be reached by the same channels. Also he was practised in the work of attracting and persuading heretics, and so long as he remained under the direction of St. Lazare he found continual occupation

* Funck-Brentano: *Le Drame des Poisons*, p. 119.

† *See* Madame de Caylus: *Souvenirs et Correspondance*, p. 45, "*faut-il parce que je fais un mal faire tous les autres ?*"

‡ For her connection with the Maison de St. Joseph, Rue S. Dominique, *see* Lemoine: *Madame de Montespan et la Légende des Poisons*.

and avoided many difficult problems. But in the spring of 1660 he stepped outside the boundary that the Lazarists set upon their labour and undertook his first Lent course in Paris. It was preached at the church of Les Minimes, close to the Place Royale. This was an extremely fashionable quarter, and the simple truths of the Church's teaching would not satisfy an audience drawn from its inhabitants. The congregation at Les Minimes was composed of persons who were well instructed in the Faith, and who were in the habit of discussing abstruse questions of theology with enthusiasm. "Women with any pretensions to cleverness make a point of telling everybody what they think about predestination and grace," writes a contemporary.* Such subjects were topics of ordinary chatter at social gatherings; discussion of them was encouraged by the fashionable ecclesiastics who were to be met at the Hôtel Rambouillet or in any other popular salon, and the opportunity was seized for the display of learning and of wit. Even the language of devotion was familiar to those who were intimately connected with the Court, for intimacy with the Queen Regent necessitated sympathy with the life of those convents where, from time to time, she sought refuge from the sensational experiences of her chequered career.† It will be seen, then, that the rustling, whispering crowd that thronged Les Minimes to hear a notable preacher was not susceptible to the appeal that would move the congregations at a Lazarist Mission to repentance and conversion; it was, in fact, difficult to find any argument or suggestion that they did not know already. The mental attitude of the society woman was admirably presented by Madame de La Sablière in a letter to the Jesuit Père Rapin.

"I am always honest with you," she wrote, "and I tell you plainly that I should greatly like to be devout, but that I am not so at all. I have so high an idea of the standard of true piety that I have no strength to aspire

* Rapin: *Mémoires*, vol. i, p. 62.

† *See* V. Cousin: *Madame de Chevreuse et Madame de Hautefort*, vol. ii, p. 21.

after it, because of the immense number of things which it appears I should be required to give up. Moreover, if one has good manners, as I think, reverend father, without vanity I may say that I have, what is most important is secure, and one is inclined to be slack about the rest."*

"Thus," cried Bossuet, "we attempt to link Christ and Belial—and what has been produced? A race of semi-Christians, a corrupt race of worldly Christians who have nothing but a bastard sort of piety, all chatter and vain semblance. O fashionable piety, with your boastings and your elaborate phrases which flow so readily so long as the world is going well, what can I offer you except derision?" †

It was not the wickedness of the worldlings that aroused his scorn, for he was in quest of sinners—it was their levity. These fashionable congregations would listen with admiration while he declared to them the consequences of the vices and the self-indulgence to which most of them were addicted; they were charmed with the beauty of his discourse when he depicted the peace and ultimate delight of a life of righteousness; they followed his argument point by point with flattering attention, and his sermons were a topic for conversation in the highest circles; but there was little evidence that his message to his listeners at Les Minimes had any effect upon their actual conduct. His eloquence at its highest level might provoke sensations of alarm or of regret, but these were only sensations; a popular actor might boast a like achievement and would receive a wider measure of recognition.

The dearth of personal record leaves us without knowledge of Bossuet's valuation of the conditions that he found in Paris. Just when he made his own great venture, and entered on the possibilities of service which the great world seemed to offer, another struggling genius was emerging from obscurity. It was in 1659, the year that Bossuet left Metz, that Molière first played

* Quoted Griselle: *Bourdaloue: Histoire Critique*, vol. i, p. 300.

† *Œuvres*, vol. xii: *Panégyrique de St. André.*

before the King. The actor was five years older than the priest, but he had raised himself from indigence, and when his place was won no preacher could compete with him in influence over the minds of his contemporaries. And the young abbé in the Doyenné du Louvre had sufficient penetration to realize the immensity of the power which a great gift had placed in the hands of the popular favourite. The deep root of his resentment on this count became evident forty years later. Probably the disappointment, inevitable to men of great intentions, which shadowed his years in Paris, weighed on him more heavily because in Molière he saw the possibilities of real success. For him, in those days, there was no certainty of eventual fame ; other men before him had been as full of fervour, as certain that they held the remedy for the evil under which the world was groaning, and had made their puny efforts, and had died and been forgotten. He must have foreseen the possible difficulty of obtaining listeners, and when that was overcome he faced another hindrance of a more insidious kind. A world that welcomed and applauded him had not the least intention of altering its customs at his bidding. One of his contemporaries, having been required to observe him at this time, sums up his observations thus : " His preaching is austere but it is very Christian, and those who know him personally say that his life accords with his preaching. He always seems to me to be very clever and I know that he is good. His appearance is not deceptive, for it is charming. He gives the impression of being modest, contented, and thoughtful. I know nothing of him that is not excellent." *

Colbert, the King's First Minister, was making inquiries about the Abbé Bossuet, and this was the result. The testimonial is in every way satisfactory, but it was written in 1662, when Bossuet was thirty-five and his great powers had attained full development, and neither the demand for it nor the terms in which it is couched would have been possible if adequate recognition had

* *Lettres de Colbert*, vol. v, appendix xv, p. 504.

been accorded to them. His ambition at this time concentrated on obtaining the widest opportunities of usefulness ; he had a message to deliver, and if he failed in its delivery it meant the failure of his lifework, but in that year 1662 the possibilities of real achievement still hung in the balance. Moreover, the friendly view of his personality which we have recorded does not appear to have been universal. If a man displayed conspicuous power it became the duty of the King's First Minister to collect all information available with regard to him, in case his power might be used in the service of the State. A second report on the Abbé Bossuet may be found in Colbert's *Confidential Correspondence*.* It shows him in an aspect that is not directly contradictory to the first, as "keen-witted, sympathetic, eager to please everyone with whom he came in contact and to agree with everyone's opinion, and most unwilling to take any side lest by so doing he should hinder the attainment of his real object." The characteristics of this portrait, as it gains in detail, are those of the time-server, the man who can disguise his inclinations and master his real self that he may win favour. "When he sees the part that will bring him the highest fortune he will accept it whatever it may be, and it is likely that he will play it very well." That is the summing-up.

The unknown critic was superficial in his judgment, however. No doubt it was true enough that Bossuet was waiting upon Fortune, but the eagerness for personal advancement so clearly indicated in the report is impossible to prove from authentic records of him.† The power that he coveted, moreover, was not concerned with temporal affairs; he hungered for dominion over the minds of other men that he might convince them of that which he believed to be the Truth. And in the future the tasks that were destined to foster personal ambition were

* Quoted Gérin: "*L'Assemblée du Clergé*, etc.," p. 290.

† The comment on him in *Les Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* says: "*c'était un des ecclésiastiques les plus zélés et les plus exemplaires de la Compagnie.*" *See* MS. Bib. Nat., quoted *Revue Bossuet*, 1901, p. 32.

not solicited ; there was no moment in his life when he planned his labours with any view to self-aggrandizement.

During this precarious period of his career he offered his services freely to the convents, and it has been suggested that in doing so he was seeking to attract the notice of the Queen-mother. It is true that Carmel had great fascination for the two Spanish queens, and the Carmelite convents north and south of the river were centres of fashionable devotion. But if he had been angling for Court favour he would, when he preached the Lent course at the Louvre in 1662, have used the opportunity the appointment gave him for making himself acceptable to the King. It is notorious that he did not do so.

In fact the motive for the service that he gave to the convents was his deep sympathy with the Religious Life. We have seen how the veil which hides the domain of the spirit had been lifted for him just as his life of full activity began, and that he realized then " the wound of the love of Jesus " as something more than the mere phrase of mystic writers. If that transitory experience inflamed his tireless energy to fresh ardour in the search for errant souls, it inspired him also with a craving for response to that which he felt to be highest in himself. He was fond of asserting that a preacher is dependent upon his auditors, and in a convent chapel his appeal to the idle throng whom he confronted from the pulpit drew half its force from his remembrance of the listeners behind the grille. It can be maintained, after study of his sermons, that the deepest in thought and spiritual understanding are those preached at the Carmelite Convent of the Rue St. Jacques.

The powers that Bossuet possessed could not be used mechanically ; their force did not wax and wane at his discretion : he was an artist though his art was spiritual, and therefore his message was hindered in its delivery by an environment that was uncongenial.* The proof

* " *C'est aux auditeurs de faire les prédicateurs.*"—*Sur la Parole de Dieu* (*Œuvres*, vol. ix, p. 122).

that he held his place in these centres of devotion by virtue of powers that are not born of calculation lies in the fact that he was chosen again and again by individuals to preach the sermon of Clothing or Profession. That was a tribute to something in him higher than the gift of oratory, for those by whom he was selected were women whose vocation was so clear as to serve as a beacon to others. The central figure in these ceremonies was taking upon herself a great responsibility, for the vocation of the contemplative is not easy to fulfil, and, if the words of exhortation were to be worthy of the act they heralded, it was necessary that the speaker should have the true vision of the Religious Life. It was because he possessed this vision that a few years later Louise de La Vallière sought and found in him the support she needed in the problems of her tangled career. The great friendship of his life with the Abbé de Rancé owed its permanence to the same source, for it would have been difficult to maintain intimacy with the Trappist and refuse sympathy to the impulse of self-immolation.

This side of the character of Bossuet claims separate and careful study. The ascetic tendency in him has not been given its due place in the traditional portrait, and remembrance of its actuality is specially important during the years of swift development in Paris when the conditions of the social life around him were gradually unfolding before his astonished eyes. He preached four sets of sermons before the Court, beginning in 1662 with the Lent course at the Louvre, ending in 1669 with Advent at St. Germain, and this experience was important, but it was only a minor part of the training the years were giving him. The Louvre was not yet deserted in favour of Versailles, and Bossuet's place of abode was therefore very near the heart and centre of the kingdom. His work took him north and east and south—away to the northern suburbs to take counsel with the Lazarists or to give assistance in their ceaseless labours, eastward to the wealthy quarter where the oldest families in France had dwelt for generations, and then, crossing the river southward, up the long straight in-

cline of the Rue St. Jacques to the great space beyond the Luxembourg where innumerable monasteries were clustered. In the years to come the coach of the Bishop of Meaux was provided with a travelling library * and its occupant was always immersed in books, but the Abbé Bossuet had to make his way about the city by simpler methods, and had opportunities for the acquirement of another species of knowledge during his journeys. The experience of men and manners that he must have gained was calculated to intensify his eagerness in the service of the Church, for he held that the remedy for all the misery he witnessed lay in her keeping. With each one of his ten years in Paris, however, the hindrances to the evangelizing of society became, of necessity, more manifest.

He was an idealist, or he would have lost courage. Practical, logical, industrious as he might appear before the world, he was nevertheless a dreamer of dreams, one who could turn from disappointment and baffling difficulty to an interior vision that held the promise of peace whatever might befall. We find him in this character in a letter to his intimate friend and confidant, M. de Bellefonds, written at a moment when the world was pressing him on every side.

" I picture a condition which it is hardly possible to describe," he wrote ; " it is clear to me in theory though I am very far away from it in practice. Imagine a soul which knows itself to be nothing and is quite content with its nothingness, but yet emerges from it at a summons which seems to have come from God ; it accepts activity in obedience, yet sighs inwardly after the quiet where it can feel God's Presence unhindered. In obedience it takes its part in the world without caring for its office or for itself ; equally ready to do or not to do ; yet doing all things with energy because it is the will of God that nothing should be done listlessly ; moreover, because it loves to follow the will of God it carries out all undertakings as divine commands, and not to give satisfaction to itself or to others. A

* *Revue Bossuet*, 1904, p. 173.

soul such as this would rather be as nought in its own eyes and in the eyes of the world ; it would have no being save before God and remain useless unless used by Him. Consider the joy with which the Blessed Virgin cried : ' He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.'

" I am using a great many words because I have not yet arrived at the root of that which I am seeking : a single word should be sufficient to convey it and, failing human words, it is enough to fix one's mind on the Word Incarnate, Jesus hidden for thirty years, no more than a carpenter for thirty years, seemingly useless for thirty years, but in reality very useful to the world, for He was showing it that real life is to live only for God. He emerged from obscurity when God so willed it, but, though He was working for humanity, all the time He was still seeking God and finding God."*

" I have not yet arrived at the root of that which I am seeking "—possibly to the end of his life Bossuet would have been ready to make that avowal, yet behind all the activity that the world observed and criticized this secret quest went on. The problem of existence was solved very simply by Louise de La Vallière, by Rancé, and by many others, and Bossuet had close and familiar intercourse with them; but he could not share in their security. His vocation was for a life in the world, a life passed in the midst of grievous perils in which he never approached his ideal of self-surrender; nevertheless in accepting it he obeyed the call of God. We have seen him from his boyhood onwards intent on conveying to the world the precious knowledge which had been committed to him, and no rebuffs could shake him in his purpose. This sense of vocation governed his whole life and he had deep comprehension of its meaning. At the very end of his years of work in Paris he delivered a sermon on Vocation at the Carmel of the Rue St. Jacques, and in spite of the fact that his hearers were, many of them, experts in his chosen subject he had never before produced so profound an impression.† In that place, where each one of his listeners behind the grille

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 90. † Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 86.

had made her venture of entire self-surrender, he set forth the meaning of detachment and proclaimed the dependence of every human effort upon the will of God. That he could do so with success is proof of his own spiritual advance during those years of preaching.*

"When God wishes to show that a piece of work is really in His hands He allows it to reach the point of absolute defeat—and then He raises it." That is the note to which the whole sermon is attuned. The preacher, always untiring in his study of the Scriptures, had evidently found his thoughts arrested by the miracle of the Church's birth. "Only consider, I beg of you," he cried, "what it was that these fishermen undertook to do! Never did monarch or empire or republic make so ambitious an attempt. They had no expectation of any human help, yet they made the world a field for conquest and divided it among themselves. They intended to bring about a change throughout the universe in all established religion whether false or true, among Jews and among Gentiles. They were going to establish a new way of worship, a new way of sacrifice, a new law—because, as they said, this was the teaching of a man who had been crucified at Jerusalem. Let the world laugh as it will: a cause that could hold its own in defiance of all probability, against the sharpest possible tests, depending for support on men who were full of doubts and fears, of whom the boldest denied his Master out of cowardice, a cause such as this is true! A sham will not reach so far, a surprise will not last so long, a dream is not so consistent."

Here, vehement and spontaneous, we have the appeal this man could make by reason of his faith; he swept away the artificial methods that had long been practised in fashionable pulpits, and strove to set before his listeners the picture which had gripped his own imagination. And if the cause upheld before the world by those humble fishermen of Galilee were true, what then? The argument discloses itself gradually. The claim of the

* For the attack on his private life and evidence connected with it, *see* Appendix iii.

Crucified was an affront to human intelligence in the days when His disciples first urged it on mankind, yet it has won its way and still remains no less contradictory to human reason and no less constant in insistence than it was then.

"How hard it is—when the world is offering us all things—to deny ourselves anything! How is any one to understand that in the midst of abundance he should endure privation, that the life of penitence demands that he should face every kind of suffering? Yet little by little he will discover more peace and more delight in the rigour of penitence and in the humiliation of the way of the Cross than the lovers of the world will ever draw from the wildest of its joys and the greatest of its triumphs."*

The paradox is familiar, but on Bossuet's lips it becomes a challenge, and he leads his audience on from the suggestion of self-discipline as a necessity in ordinary life to consideration of the further claim which could only be satisfied within the cloister. The listeners ranged before him in the nave belonged to the great world, but it was to those behind the grille that he looked for entire understanding. He had the vision of their life and its true meaning. He saw it as a state of perpetual self-offering which, at its highest, was the nearest approach to the imitation of Christ that human conditions permitted, and the fervour of his admiration was infectious; those to whose hearts he spoke were inspired to new knowledge of the privilege of their vocation.

To himself at that moment the call had come in a very different form. The period of his obscurity was at an end, and he was even then a well-known figure in the world of Paris. But perhaps as he put aside the picture he had made so clear for others, and left Carmel and its silent appeal behind him, his certainty that God had summoned him to labour in the world was mingled with regret.

* *Panégyrique de St. André* (*Œuvres*, vol. xii).

Chapter IV. *The Battlefield of Controversy*

DURING the years that he was winning renown as a preacher Bossuet was vigorously at work in other directions. Among those who listened to his sermons a few at least were in earnest and sought counsel from him. We hear of instructions given in the private apartments of Madame de Longueville,* of growing friendship with M. de Luynes and M. de Bellefonds, of intercourse with Mlle. de Montpensier and with Henrietta Maria, the widowed Queen of England. At a time when all the various parties within the Church threw suspicion on each other Bossuet inspired waverers with confidence ; and the reluctance to choose a side, for which he was criticized, was an assistance in his attempts to heal divisions among the faithful. Possibly there were certain questions in which he recognized the danger of decision. Among these may be numbered the Six Articles † propounded in 1663 by the Faculty of Theology assembled at the Sorbonne.‡ They embodied the statement of Gallican independence with which years later he was to be so closely associated, and it is interesting to find his name noted among the party opposed to their promulgation.§

At Metz the question of heresy was comparatively simple ; a heretic was a person who had been led astray by the teaching of Calvin or of Luther, and his return to the Church required visible acts and involved visible consequences. But in Paris there were heretical by-paths besides the broad road indicated by the Reformers, and minor heresies became dangerous because they were spread by the many who talked, before the thoughtful few had had time to pronounce judgment on them. The King was intolerant of those who differed from himself ; he aspired to absolute control over the thoughts and opinions of his subjects. The intelligence of a Frenchman does not submit readily to coercion, however, and royal interference was apt to turn temporary disagree-

* Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 86.
† *See* Appendix iv.
‡ Jourdain: *Hist. de l'Université de Paris*, p. 221.
§ Gérin: *L'Assemblée de* 1682, p. 85.

ments into open warfare and to aggravate the many disastrous controversies of the period. Of these the most important in the history of the Church in France is that concerning Jansenism. Probably there has never been a question of theology which has aroused such inextinguishable bitterness, but Bossuet, who in later years exhibited a capacity for partisanship of a very vigorous type, was never deeply involved in this particular struggle ; whenever he touched it he was in the character of peacemaker. The fact is especially noticeable because Nicolas Cornet, his friend and master, was responsible for extracting the famous Five Propositions from the study of St. Augustine written by Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres.* When the Five Propositions were condemned by the Pope the defenders of Jansenius denied that they could be discovered in his book,† and Cornet became the object of their most violent antipathy. Bossuet managed to maintain friendly relations with Antoine Arnauld, however, and with many on whom the taint of Jansenism had fallen, without abating his admiration for their chief accuser.

When Cornet died in April 1663 the task of preaching the sermon and panegyric which the custom of the time demanded was assigned to Bossuet, and he seized the opportunity to summarize the position of the contending parties in a passage that has become celebrated : " In these days there are two grave diseases afflicting the Church : there are certain among its leaders who are imbued with a cruel sort of good-nature, a deadly type of compassion, at the suggestion of which they have cushions made ready for the elbows of penitents and search for cloaks to provide them with a disguise for their sins, thus avoiding wounds to vanity and encouraging the pretence of simplicity and ignorance. There are others also who go to the opposite extreme and bind the conscience with unreasonable strictness : they cannot

* Soyez : *Vie de Nicolas Cornet*, p. 26.

† On this point Bossuet did not temporize. *See* Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 382, " *il dit qu'il a relu Jansenius tout entier, et que comme il fit il y a quarante ans, il y a retrouvé les Cinq Propositions très-nettement.*"

make allowance for any weaknesses, they flourish the threat of hell continually, and have nothing to offer except curses. The Evil One has use for both sides equally—the easy-going make vice attractive, the violent make virtue alarming."*

When those words were spoken it was five years since Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, destined to infuse such extraordinary acrimony into the Jansenist controversy, had made their sensational appearance. That masterpiece of pamphleteering is a personal attack from the Jansenist camp upon the methods and principles of the opposing party. Personal attacks were then in vogue. It was a period when the war of pamphlets was waged unceasingly in one direction or another, and the scribes, writing for the moment, claimed the licence to put their case with the vividness that cannot be attained without exaggeration. Response, delivered on equal terms, came swiftly, the real point at issue became more and more obscured by personalities, and excitement rose until the moment when hostilities were checked by authority, either ecclesiastical or secular. When that stage was reached the nature of the missiles thrown in the heat of battle ceased to have serious significance.

For the defence of Port Royal, however, a genius seized his pen, and, writing swiftly to arrest popular imagination at the moment, he produced work of imperishable quality. This offence has never found forgiveness, and the cause he made his own paid heavily for the glory won by its champion. Pascal died before the world had recognized the literary value of the *Provincial Letters*, and it is unlikely † that Bossuet grasped its significance among the factors determining the fortunes of Port Royal when he composed his Funeral Panegyric on Nicolas Cornet. In condemning the extremists on both sides he adhered to the controversial methods habitual with him and attempted to make the way of

* *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 669.

† See *Écrit sur le Style*, 1669 (Floquet: *Études*, Appendix): "*Les Lettres au Provincial, dont quelques-unes ont beaucoup de force et de véhémence, et toutes une extrême délicatesse.*"

reconciliation easy. And his good intentions were so far recognized that Perefixe, Archbishop of Paris, enlisted his services for the persuasion of the religious of Port Royal. By this time the two leaders of opinion, Angélique Arnauld and Jacqueline Pascal, were dead, and the Community had been scattered by order of the King. Bossuet's mission was to La Mère Agnès and her niece Marie Angélique Arnauld, in the Visitation Convent in the Rue St. Jacques, where they were relegated until they would make formal denunciation of the Jansenist heresy as summarized in the Five Propositions.*

It is possible, but not certain, that the younger of the rebels was influenced by Bossuet ; La Mère Agnès remained unaffected, however, and his arguments and exhortations had no lasting results. The importance of the incident rests on a letter he addressed to the Community of Port Royal in which the case against them is stated temperately. Events moved rapidly, and by the time the letter was ready for dispatch the Jansenist mutiny had become too definite for a scholarly remonstrance of this type, therefore it never reached its destination and was reserved in case of future opportunity for use. Its revision was one of the last labours of Bossuet. Some forty years after he composed it the controversy regarding Père Quesnel stirred the same questions as he had treated in his interviews with Marie Angélique, and he believed that his long-buried study of them would be of service.† It was published in 1709 by Cardinal de Noailles and aroused considerable comment,‡ for strife still surged around Port Royal with unabated violence. Its interest for the student of Bossuet, however, lies in the conception of the Church that it presents. Originally the State may have been responsible for the mistaken handling of the Jansenists, but their ultimate revolt was

* See *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 21, *Notes*, pp. 85–87, and *Revue des Deux Mondes*, October and November 1919, for detail re dealings of Bossuet with Jansenist Controversy.

† Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. i, p. 372.

‡ The position of Bossuet towards Père Quesnel and the controversy that eventually produced the Bull *Unigenitus* is examined by M. Urbain (*Revue du Clergé français*, juillet 1897, août 1899).

against the authority of the Church. And Bossuet, in his remonstrance with them, shows that the intellectual independence they were claiming was inconsistent with the Faith. Then and always he saw that unity depended on the acceptance of the decision of the Church in all spiritual matters. It is the reassertion of this principle rather than the condemnation of Jansenism that is the theme of the letter to Port Royal. In truth, Jansenist doctrine in itself never seems to have aroused him to serious apprehension ; the menace of it in his eyes was the insubordination of its advocates. He decided in his youth to combat Jansenism by a statement of the necessity of obedience to the Pope in spiritual matters, and forty years later he set the seal on that early decision and manifested the unvarying quality of his convictions. Yet while he judged the Jansenists as rebels he was never numbered among their accusers. The standard which Angélique Arnauld had set before her Community, and through them before the world, was a high one, and he could appreciate its value. Probably an honest observer could not do otherwise, for we find even her vehement opponent, the Jesuit historian Père Rapin, paying his tribute to the root of purity from which the whole Port Royal movement sprang,* and to Bossuet, approaching the case unbiassed, the circumstances extenuating the guilt of the Port Royalists must have been clearly evident. Indeed, their original revolt against habits and practices which dishonoured the name of Christianity expressed the principle which inspired his most powerful sermons, and the measure of sympathy which he accorded to them † brought on him the suspicion of Jansenist proclivities. The suspicion had no solid foundation and has been harboured only by those who desire to discredit him, but he must have been aware that he risked discredit by continuing to be intimate with those whom the world condemned. By so doing, however, he acquired personal knowledge of the ideas prompt-

* Rapin: *Mémoires*, vol. i, p. 443.

† See *Correspondance*, vol. i, Nos. 128, 129 ; appendix xiv ; vol. iii, Nos. 291, 293, 314.

ing the reform which had grown into revolt, and could estimate the degree to which revolt was nurtured by persecution. Thus his position of neutrality gave him an opportunity of vision denied to those who were committed to the struggle, and what he saw was useful for his future guidance. It was plain that in the implacable hatred which could not rest without the entire ruin of Port Royal there were other elements besides theological antagonism. He had come to Paris with that high sense of the possibilities of individual effort in the evangelization of society which had been the inspiration and the snare of Angélique Arnauld forty years earlier. No doubt even without the example of her experience he would have learnt that the world does not desire to listen to a message of wholesale condemnation, but the story of Port Royal provided a salutary warning against undue insistence on unpopular doctrines.

Bossuet was no fanatic ; his dedication of himself and all his capacities to the service of the Church was conditioned by the resolve to use his powers to the best advantage. He was governed most often by motives deeply rooted in religion, but there is no moment of his life when his choice of action was due to a swift impulse of religious fervour ; even his self-dedication was a considered act made in his youth and maintained until his death. When he fought against the open enemies of the Church he placed his blows deliberately and husbanded his strength ; and when he realized, as he did in his life at Court, that vigorous denunciation of evil, instead of lessening its volume would only close his own opportunities of approach to the evil-doer, he accepted silence. At every step there is evidence of calculation, and undoubtedly an occasional lapse into the swift venture of the enthusiast would add attraction to his record. He was devoid of the gambler's spirit, however, and the dangerous hours that the future held for him were not of his own choosing ; indeed, his methods of service to the Church appeared to himself to be inevitable ; he recognized no choice.

Certainly the controversy that had the first claim upon

him was fought openly, for there were no subtleties in the battle between Catholics and Huguenots. Both parties fought—with equal desire though not with equal chances—for supremacy in France ; both parties were unscrupulous as to the means employed to gain their ends, and it is probable that a Huguenot ruler would have adopted the policy of extermination as readily as did Louis XIV. This was the spirit of the times. In individual cases, and throughout his diocese when power was in his hands, Bossuet was merciful, but he was never tolerant in any question that concerned the Catholic faith. To his vigorous patriotism tolerance was impossible ; it was the privilege of his country to be Catholic, and therefore heresy was treason to the King as well as to the Church. His was a clear and simple view : the teaching of the Reformers was equally destructive to themselves and to the commonwealth, and must therefore by argument or by force be silenced. He differed from his contemporaries, however, in the value that he gave to argument. He believed that a great deal of heresy was rooted in misconception, that the Church from which the Huguenots revolted was the Church as presented by Bellarmin, not the Church of Gallican tradition. It was his aim to show them that the Church's doors stood wide open to receive them, and that prejudice or calumny was responsible for most of the obstacles which seemed to them insurmountable. Indeed, although the Catholic faith was part of his being he had none of the vices of the bigot: he strove to win opponents to agreement, it was the office of smaller minds to bully into submission.

We shall see that his writings on the Protestant controversy are impregnated with the theory that reunion was attainable, and the strength of his case seemed to him so formidable that, granted a fair hearing, he could not fail to win it. If he had lived in the sixteenth century he might have laboured less vainly, but religion and politics had become hopelessly entangled in the intervening period, and every Huguenot who died for his faith made the barrier to agreement more insurmountable.

When Bossuet came upon the scene he could claim that there was a general desire for reunion, but the only means of fulfilling that desire acceptable to either party was the unreserved capitulation of the other, and all his concessions and explanations did not inspire wise and observant minds with hope. Cardinal de Bérulle had declared, after a lifetime of reflection, that forcible repression by the State was the only way to deal with Protestantism.* His conclusion is a confession of weakness, yet it must be acknowledged that the result of Bossuet's great endeavour confirms it. In fact, the memory of the massacres under Charles IX in the minds of Huguenots, and the thought of the political situation in England under Cromwell in the minds of Catholics, were obstacles to peace that no theologian could move by so much as a hairsbreadth. Bossuet raised controversial methods to a higher level † and achieved many individual conversions, but unity remained as unattainable as though he had never taken pen in hand.

It was in 1654 that Paul Ferry, at that time the leader of the Protestants in Metz, published his *Catéchisme Général de la Réformation*, with the object of showing that the Protestant schism had been a necessity. In April of the following year Bossuet replied. He was twenty-seven at this time, but, as we have seen, he attained to intellectual maturity very early, and this, his first assay in polemics, is free from the ordinary faults of youth and bears witness to that capacity for seizing and presenting the real points at issue which gave him such force as a controversialist. His answer to Paul Ferry ‡ was at once a pleading and a protest against the separation of the Reformers from the Church. He does not deny that many evils were crying for reform, but he declaims against the policy of adding to their number a greater one than all—that of schism. Under two distinct heads he admitted the responsibility of Catholics for alienating the Reformers: by teaching which he regarded as un-

* Tabaraud: *Vie de C. de Bérulle*, vol. ii, pp. 52, 55.
† See *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 23, and appendix x.
‡ *Œuvres*, vol. xiii.

authorized and contrary to tradition, and by a way of life that gave cause for scandal.*

He declared, on an occasion when he preached before the King,† that "the bodyguard of the Church is required as a defence against all human weaknesses and vices and passions, against all the bad habits of the worldly, against all the scheming of the heretics; in short, against all the energies of hell. Does it not need therefore to be as well equipped with experience and skill and wisdom, yes, and with courage also, as the troops of the visible world? But what is one to think when those who hold command are completely ignorant of tactics? Heresy wins kingdom after kingdom from the Church. Where will you find the cause of that disaster? The answer rises up all around us from the depths of hell—the cry of the people from the abyss into which they have fallen: 'Unworthy priests are the cause of our destruction; their follies and their ignorance made us distrust them; their pride and their malice made us hate them; when we turned from them we became the prey of our seducers!' While the sentries slept the enemy came upon us and the Faith has been despoiled because its appointed keepers were neglectful."‡

These are strong words, but Vincent de Paul fifty years earlier had given voice to the same opinion: "The worst enemies of the Church are her unworthy priests," and there is sufficient evidence to justify them. Even Père Rapin § allowed that the exaggerated rigour of Port Royal found its excuse in the corruption within the Church that Mazarin encouraged, and Bossuet, in acknowledging responsibility for the errors of the Huguenots, lost the self-righteousness that is the ordinary characteristic of the controversialist. In all his dealing

* The Minister Claude vehemently repudiated the suggestion that Huguenot belief owed any of its strength to the depravity of Catholics. See *Œuvres Posthumes*, vol. v, p. 110.

† *Œuvres*, vol. x, p. 164.

‡ *See* also Introduction, *Hist. des Variations des Eglises Protestantes* (*Œuvres*, vol. xiv).

§ Rapin: *Mémoires*, vol. i, p. 212.

with Paul Ferry he never forgot the respect due to a man of great learning and irreproachable virtue who was old enough to be his father, and his desire to conciliate was inseparable from his eagerness to convince. His response to Ferry's pamphlet, instead of opening a feud, established a friendship ; the Huguenot and the priest discovered that they held one great aim in common, and that each was absolutely sincere in his pursuit of it. If realization of their dream of unity had been attainable they were the men to give it substance. In fact their friendship left their division unaffected. After twelve years they were still conferring, and we find Bossuet planning to visit Ferry at whatever time he chooses. " I will come to you in your library ; I only ask that you should be at leisure and alone."* He was untiring in writing letters that set forth what may be termed the minimum of Catholic faith and doctrine required for reconciliation with the Church, but the enterprise was foredoomed to failure ; it is evident that the Huguenot party, as a whole, would not have agreed to any scheme of reconciliation that it was possible for a Catholic priest to propound.

Bossuet seems to have merited the reputation for kindliness in personal dealing with the Huguenots ordinarily accorded to him. Episodes are recorded, nevertheless, in which his conduct cannot be described as kindly. These do not belong only to the difficult period at Meaux after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. There are letters † written from Metz which give evidence of a keen desire to avail himself of the authority of the Law to its utmost limits for the discomfiture of his Protestant neighbours. His inconsistency was not altogether without method, however. When he settled in Metz about one third of the population, some ten thousand persons, professed the Reformed Religion, and they were a well-conducted body, loyal to the King, diligent in business, and becoming more and more influential as the years passed. To Bossuet the spectacle of prosperous and contented

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 22. † *Ibid.*, Nos. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Huguenots was unseemly; if they confronted him on equal terms they were his enemies; it was only when they suffered in mind or body that charity had part in his relations with them. Nothing indeed could be so fatal to his hopes as this contentment. Actually it was rare to find among the followers of Paul Ferry the restlessness of spirit which gave him his opportunity, and his persuasive gifts were wasted on those whose faith sufficed them.

Chapter V. *The Conversion of Turenne*

THE Court itself proved the best field for individual conversion, and the genius of Bossuet found its most fruitful opportunity among those sons and daughters of the ruling class whose fathers had rejected the old Faith. The new religion had been the fashion at Court a century earlier, and the Huguenot nobles who fought under the banner of Navarre against the League had been able then to unite loyalty to their King and to their Faith; but their descendants were in a different position. It has been said* that Henri IV, in his personal charm, in his virtues and in his vices, is the type of the high-born Frenchman. If this be so his action, when he abjured Protestantism, was symbolic as demonstrating that the true French temperament can assimilate the Faith of the Catholic Church and none other. The aspiration of a section of the middle class in the sixteenth century, which resulted in schism and in civil war, was after a high ideal, a new form for the old Faith. It was prompted by disgust at prevalent disorder, not by intellectual negation as in Germany † or by the spirit of a political party such as that of the Puritans in England, and it was an unfortunate succession of circumstances that made it a danger to the State. The position of nobles who were Huguenot was encompassed by many difficulties, some of which derived their force from sentiment, for under the Bourbon monarchy aristocrat and courtier were almost synonymous terms and the true courtier cannot remain at variance with his King. The scholars summed up the position in a phrase : *Cujus regio ejus religio*, and it was very difficult to be superior to a sentiment which was held by all who were most worthy of esteem. To assert that it was among the nobility that Bossuet found the most fertile ground for his persuasions and arguments against the Reformed Faith is not thereby to impugn the sincerity of the conversions he effected. Tradition and inheritance were all on the side of the Church, and tradition and in-

* Antin : *L'Echec de la Réforme en France*, p. 238.

† Ramsay : *Hist. de Turenne*, vol. i, pp. 7, 8.

heritance were stronger forces in men of pure descent than in a humbler and more promiscuous class. As the years passed Bossuet's intellectual distinction gave him more and more intercourse with a social grade above his own, and the combination in him of learning and of sincerity, which seems to have been very generally recognized, had special attractions for those whose change of Faith was of public importance.

Most celebrated, and most deliberate in process of all the conversions of the period, was that of Marshal Turenne. For him worldly consideration lay on one side and family ties on the other, while personal opinion wavered betwixt the two. He stood, moreover, between Claude and Bossuet, who were in future to be adversaries before the world, and by temperament he was no more disposed to theological controversy than any other eminent soldier. In private life he was of peaceable and kindly disposition, and was reputed to be under the influence of his sisters,* who were all ardent Calvinists. At forty he married a woman whose intellectual ability was equal to his own, and whose religious convictions were far stronger—Charlotte de Caumont la Force.† She was the friend of the minister Claude, and her enthusiasm for Reform was of the type that thrives on persecution. The marriage took place in 1651, and those sanguine persons who had seen in Turenne a medium of reconciliation between his party and the Church recognized that this alliance was an insuperable obstacle to the fulfilment of their hopes.

When Condé, after his imprisonment by Mazarin, turned traitor, Turenne was the greatest commander left to the French Army, and his adhesion to the cause of Reform became a fact of serious political importance. It is probable that his chief desire was to abstain from all religious discussion, to serve his King and country with all his great ability, and to enjoy domestic peace when his country was not needing him. The spirit of the times in which he lived, however, did not permit him to fulfil

* *See* Picaret: *Les Dernières Années de Turenne*, p. 202.

† *Ibid.*, p. 18.

these moderate ambitions. His world was insatiable in curiosity and untiring in speculation as to the possible developments of his religious opinions. His elder brother had long since returned to the Church,* and Turenne's real inclinations may have lain in the same direction, but he knew that his wife and sisters would not follow him and therefore in his individual existence conversion implied havoc.

It is a curious picture, belonging essentially to that period and to no other. On the one hand the King, impatient of any opposition to his wishes, ready with bribe or threat to obtain his will : behind him and one with him in opinion, the great mass of society ; and at his side, sharing his eagerness, Bossuet, the most perfect medium through which the royal wishes might become articulate. On the other hand were forces less susceptible of calculation : the traditions of a lifetime, the deep implanted memories of purity and virtue springing from the Faith the Huguenot professed, and, finally, the influence that women of indomitable will can exercise in the association of daily life.† Lured to advance by every prize the world can offer, yet held by chains whose every link was dear, it is no marvel that the puzzled soldier evaded arguments and temporized with direct questions bearing on the Faith. His wife and sisters were unequivocal in their dislike of Rome, and he, whose courage was so conspicuous on the field of battle, does not seem to have displayed that quality in domestic intercourse. And so he continued to disappoint the fashionable ecclesiastics who were sent to convince him of his errors. Such persons never received a rebuff, but gradually it became evident that his case was not more hopeful because there was no violent prejudice or antagonism to be overcome ; his resistance was gentle, but persuasion left him unmoved.

A series of bereavements altered the position.‡ In swift succession he lost two of his sisters, Mlle. de Bouillon and Madame de la Trémouille, and in 1666 his wife died.

* In 1636.

† *See* Picaret : *op. cit.*, pp. 211–213.

‡ Picaret : *op. cit.*, p. 220.

Popular opinion had assigned responsibility for his obstinacy to Madame de Turenne, and it was supposed that the news of her death would be followed by the announcement of his conversion. For a time, however, her influence survived her, and if her husband had been less important to the State he would probably have died a Huguenot. But he was not allowed to remain undisturbed ; his friends were scheming constantly to bring him within reach of such presentations of the Church's teaching as might rouse in him the desire, hitherto lacking, for the benefits she only could bestow. Finally, in the autumn of the year 1668, he abjured his errors and was received into the Church. The Oratorian preachers had some share in the conquest, and Turenne himself acknowledged a debt to Antoine Arnauld, the Jansenist.* It was due chiefly to Bossuet, however, and the Bishopric of Condom was his reward.

Undoubtedly he rendered a great service to the State when he fixed the hesitating opinion that had hung so long in the balance, and it is likely that the tremendous weight of his own conviction was just the force required for a condition of vacillation that had become chronic. That there were inducements that had no connection with theology is plain. The conversion of Turenne was of great benefit to his country ; it was also, like that of Henri IV, advantageous to his personal fortunes, and knowledge that this would be so was a perfectly legitimate argument in its favour. All this was open to the consideration of Bossuet ; his enterprise had been for the service of the State as well as for the Church, and his dealing with Turenne may be regarded as a link between his public and political career and that deeper side of his life which concerned the awakening of souls. This conversion was, as we have said, his stepping-stone to episcopal dignity. Preaching at Court did not advance his fortunes (although the King sent a gracious message to old Bénigne Bossuet at Metz congratulating him on the talents of his son),† for it was not the royal pleasure

* Olivier Lefevre d'Ormesson : *Journal*, October 24, 1668.

† Floquet : *Études*, vol. ii, p. 204.

to encourage talents that had been exercised overboldly on himself by giving them wider scope; and it is plain that the Abbé Bossuet would never have won preferment by the exhortations delivered in the royal chapel. It was as a result of the capitulation of Turenne that he became an object of royal favour, and his obligation to the great soldier did not end there, for the work that laid the foundation of his literary reputation was the result of their intercourse.

It is quite impossible to have any understanding in these days of the sensation created by *The Explanation of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church* which was published by Bossuet in 1671.* Short and luminous statements of every kind of Faith are now placed before the public constantly, and even those that most perfectly achieve their purpose do not create excitement. But religious opinions in the seventeenth century were matters of life and death to individuals and the causes of savage warfare among nations, and that background, and all that it means in its effects upon the minds of men, must be remembered when Bossuet's work as a controversialist is under consideration. The leader of a movement of revolt is tempted, for purposes of propaganda, to exaggerate those abuses which prompted him to violent action, and it seldom happens that the temptation is resisted. The Protestant ministers encouraged their flock to regard Catholic belief as a compound of fable and idolatry, and kept before them all the worst instances of mistaken teaching and unworthy practice that could be collected. These tactics, common to all types of controversy, infuse peculiar venom when the subject is a religious one, and an exchange of violent recriminations by the commanders of opposing camps ordinarily usurps the place of argument. The method and the aim of Bossuet differed from those in vogue. In his correspondence with Ferry he was attempting to evolve a real scheme of reunion,† and then and ever after he believed in its possibility. The progress of the negotiations alarmed the extremists

* *Œuvres*, vol. xiii. *Cf.* Arnauld, A.: *Lettres*, vol. iv, p. 155.

† See *Correspondance*, vol. i, appendix x.

on either side and the scheme collapsed, but the time and thought that Bossuet gave to it were spent to good purpose, for he acquired an insight into the mental position of the Protestants that was of incalculable service to him.

His *Exposition* of the teaching of the Catholic Church is the written summary of the statements he had made to well-disposed inquirers. His desire, as recorded in his preface, was to go to the root of the matter and dispose of the misunderstandings as well as misrepresentations which he knew to be widening the gulf between Protestantism and the Church. In fact we shall see that the book produced a new form of misunderstanding and aroused peculiar bitterness against Bossuet himself. He has been freely accused of duplicity, but if he was false in this matter it must be admitted that he showed extraordinary pertinacity in maintaining falsehood. The doctrine of the *Exposition* is foreshadowed in his celebrated letter on the Church to *la demoiselle de Metz*,* and in letters to Ferry,† and a part of it was restated in his sermon on Unity ‡ which inaugurated the Clerical Assembly of 1682. In fact, his vision of the Church never altered, and it sustained his hopes and his ardour through all the discouragement and opposition that lay before him. Unfortunately the Church as the Huguenots observed it even in their native country was difficult to reconcile with the Church that Bossuet described to them. There were many points that to them were reasons of offence, such as the Adoration of the Cross, the Invocation of Saints, the worship of Relics and of Images, the denial of the Chalice to the laity, the granting of Indulgences,§ etc., which Bossuet in his *Exposition* ignored entirely or represented as unessential. He maintained that the Reformers were alienated by "the name of a thing and not by the thing itself,"‖

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 17. † *Ibid.*, Nos. 23, 28.

‡ *Œuvres*, vol. xi.

§ For summary *see* Claude, J.: *Remontrance sur les Lettres Circulaires de l'Assemblée de* 1682 (1683), p. 36.

‖ *Œuvres*, vol. xiii: *Exposition*, etc.

and his own faith assured him that nothing really taught by the Church could shock or disturb the intelligence of well-disposed people. There is nothing aggressive in the *Exposition* ; it is an attempt to allure rather than to convict, and such an attempt was a new and astonishing experiment in controversial writing.* And part of its force was derived from the unwavering purpose that animated the writer. His appeal to unknown readers was an honest one—" the most fervent prayer which I bring daily before God is for their salvation." †

His difficulties with heretics, and also with the faithful, would have been lightened had it been possible to share with others his own capacity for differentiating between the essentials of the Faith and the pious practices that were not of obligation. He had no sympathy with the extravagances that were so repugnant to the Reformers, but he made a mistake in treating them as negligible. Contemporary writers, approved by Papal authority,‡ could be cited who urged upon the faithful just those doctrines that he waived, and it may be surmised that the approval of the book by Cardinal Bona § on the ground that " he had managed to avoid all thorny controversial questions " was not altogether innocent of irony. The *Exposition* provided waverers with an excuse for their defection and, at a time when every worldly inducement to a change of faith was offered to the Huguenots, the number of waverers was very large; but it seems only to have hardened the antagonism of the convinced believer.|| Moreover, the incredulity with which this summary of the teaching of the Church was received

* *See* Madame de Sévigné: *Lettres*, vol. ii, No. 202.

† *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 405.

‡ Two notable instances: Père Crasset, *La Véritable Dévotion envers la Sainte Vierge*, and Père Bouhours, *Vie de St. Ignace*.

§ In a letter to Cardinal de Bouillon (*Œuvres*, vol. xiii, p. 35).

|| *Cf.* La Bastide: *Seconde Réponse à M. de Condom* (1680). " La doctrine de M. de Condom sur les articles même où il se relâche, et aux termes même où il la reduit, soit qu'elle soit approuvée par tous ceux de sa communion, ou qu'elle ne le soit pas, est toujours directement opposée aux principes de la vraye religion " (p. 249).

expressed itself in prognostications that it would never be sanctioned by the Pope.

Obviously Bossuet must have been confident that he had stated the veritable doctrine of the Church when he decided on the publication of his book. After its appearance, however, his letters show his eagerness for expressions of official approval,* and the growing conviction that without the authorization of the Pope his whole purpose would be defeated. The issues involved reached far beyond his concern for his personal reputation. It was on the truth of his presentation of the Church that his hopes of reunion depended, and if the party in favour of the stiffening of authority should prove more formidable than he anticipated the framework of his endeavours, past and future, would inevitably collapse.

Bossuet had entered on his duties as tutor to the Dauphin before the *Exposition* was given to the world, and thenceforward a multiplicity of occupations filled his days. Even under such conditions, however, it may be conjectured that, in the eight years intervening between its publication and the Papal Brief expressing "praise and approval of it," † he had periods of the most poignant anxiety. His hopes were raised when leave was obtained for its circulation in Rome, and he had seized that occasion to address to Innocent XI a letter ‡ in which gratitude, veneration, and eagerness for a more pronounced manifestation of agreement are skilfully combined. The Papal Brief, received in January 1679, was the direct result, and he lost no time in setting the printers to work upon a fresh edition of his book. The importance of the event can hardly be exaggerated, and jubilant references in his letters § show his appreciation of it. It placed within his reach the opportunities that he most coveted and a recent experience bore witness to his capacity for making use of them. Mlle. de Duras, niece of Marshal Turenne and a member of a well-known Protestant family, had expressed doubts regarding the

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, Nos. 54, 63, 67.
† *Ibid.*, vol. ii, No. 187.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, No. 182.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, Nos. 239, 249.

Faith in which she had been reared, and desired that Bossuet and Claude, the Protestant minister of Charenton, who had for years been in close relation with her kindred, should hold a discussion in her presence regarding their differences in belief. The result was the conference which has won such immense celebrity.

Claude had established his reputation as a writer and as a theologian by his *Défense de la Réformation*,* and his party could not have furnished a worthier representative,† therefore the contest excited widespread interest. Claude embarked upon it against his better judgment ‡ and against the advice of his friends. Mlle. de Duras declared that she looked to him to allay the doubts that were assailing her, and if he refused to meet Bossuet he would leave her defenceless, but his experience of human nature prepared him for the sequel : the symptoms of a predisposition to conversion had become familiar. The discussion took place at the house of Madame de Roye, March 1, 1678, in the presence of six persons, of whom five were Huguenots. It occupied five hours and was conducted with the utmost courtesy. Before taking leave of Bossuet Mlle. de Duras expressed a wish that she might have his arguments in writing, and shortly afterwards she was received into the Church.

As her wavering had been the occasion of the conference her conversion implied the triumph of Bossuet. The Huguenots did not accept her verdict, however, and the resentment which had been aroused by the *Exposition* became acrid when an account of the incident was printed. There had been an agreement between the parties that the discussion should not be published,§ but the version given to Mlle. de Duras was copied and recopied until at length a pirate edition, issued at Toulouse without the knowledge of its author,‖ forced him in self-

* Published 1673 in response to *Préjugés légitimes contre le calvinisme* of Nicole.

† *See* Bayle : *Dictionnaire*, vol. v, p. 226.

‡ Claude, J. : *Réponse au livre de M. l'Évêque de Meaux* (1683), p. 391.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

‖ *Œuvres*, vol. xiii, p. 499.

defence to prepare it for the press himself. After a four years' interval a conversation lasting for five hours cannot be set down *verbatim*, and the *Conférence avec M. Claude* should not be regarded as the relation of an actual argument, but merely as one among the controversial writings of Bossuet that are specially designed to continue the work of the *Exposition*. Its theme was the constitution and authority of the Church. As was inevitable, Claude replied at once,* and denied emphatically that he had made certain admissions † imputed to him, but his realization of the fruitlessness of protest is very evident. His conviction that his belief was the true one could not be shaken ; no argument of Bossuet's had moved him, yet the Conference and its sequel must have loomed large among the bitter memories of his closing years, and the courage of his response to his opponent is the courage of despair.

In following the controversial triumphs of Bossuet, in reading his lucid statements of Catholic doctrine and his stately refutation of every charge against his accuracy, it is easy to forget the external advantage of his position and the disabilities under which the Huguenots were labouring. It may appear that his moderation and self-restraint invited friendliness and gave no excuse for the detestation with which, in certain quarters, he was regarded. Yet to men of violent temper, harassed and tormented by the perpetual injustice to which the Protestants were subjected before the days of open persecution, the assurance and composure that distinguished Bossuet were in themselves an insult. This side of the picture is vividly conveyed by Jurieu, the most savage of his antagonists, in the succession of volumes ‡ which dealt with Catholic misdoing and Protestant faithfulness. "It is the clergy who are intent on driving us to despair "§

* See *Réponse*, etc., *op. cit.*, his account of conference, pp. 391–456.

† His faith in the authority of Scripture is shown in his letters xl–xlv (*Œuvres Posthumes*, vol. v).

‡ Particularly impressive is his *Politique du Clergé de France* (1681), which is mainly in the form of a dialogue between two Catholics—Parisian and Provincial.

§ See *Les Derniers Efforts de l'Innocence Affligée* (1682), p. 50.

—that is his conviction. Not the arrogance of the King, or the intrigues of politicians, or even the brutal instincts of the soldiery, could be held responsible for the miseries of the Huguenots ; it was the clergy, represented by the bishops, who inspired persecution, and therefore he held them in abhorrence. And Jurieu reserved the most poisonous shafts of his abuse for Bossuet, for he could see nothing but cunning and hypocrisy in the attempt to simplify the points of difference between the Reformers and the Church. In this, indeed, he was representative of his co-religionists. The convinced Protestants in France had watched the negotiations with Ferry with apprehension, and after the conversion of Turenne and the appearance of the *Exposition* they refused to believe that Bossuet acted in good faith. Thus he was forced to pay the penalty for the dissimulation practised by others, and a material check was imposed upon the usefulness of his labours. It is plain that he did not foresee the doom that awaited the Huguenots, and never gave sufficient weight in his calculations regarding them to the effect of injustice upon character. The *Exposition* was translated into many languages, its circulation was immense, and it made its writer famous. Its success probably exceeded his anticipations ; nevertheless, the purpose for which it was designed remained unachieved. He had not written it to help his reputation but to commend the Faith to those who had rejected it, and so restore to France that unity of worship and belief that had been hers in earlier times. And it does not appear that his venture had any appreciable effect on Protestant opinion as a whole, although it turned the scale in many individual cases. Therefore, in its relation to the longing for reunion which inspired it, the book must be regarded as a failure.

Chapter VI. *The Message of La Trappe*

DURING the first four years of his life in Paris Bossuet came into close and personal contact with a spiritual drama so remarkable that its impression on him was indelible. After nearly three centuries, indeed, it still makes appeal to the imagination.

The hero of it bore the name of Armand Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé.* He was born in the same year as Bossuet, and the two began their college career in Paris † at the same time though not at the same college. Both were recognized as possessing very remarkable abilities, and Rancé had received clerk's orders and become Canon of Notre Dame, as Bossuet was a Canon of the Cathedral at Metz, before his twelfth birthday. Despite these points of similarity, however, they were separated as widely by fortune as by character. Rancé was of good family, a godson of Cardinal Richelieu, and singled out by him for favour ; an established place in society was waiting for him, and he had all the gifts that would enable him to take full advantage of it. While he was still a child he had been appointed titular Abbot of certain monasteries with large revenues, and later he accepted the necessity of ordination as the condition on which he held his wealth. At seventeen he began to preach and his sermons attracted large congregations. The fashion of the time allowed considerable licence to a young abbé, and Rancé seems to have submitted to the wishes of his family on his own terms and refused to accept the obligations of an office he had not desired.

"What are you doing to-day?" asked an old comrade, meeting him in the street.

"This morning I shall preach like an angel, this afternoon I shall ride like the devil," was the reply.

Such is the traditional anecdote ‡ and, whether the

* For study of Rancé *see* Sainte-Beuve: *Hist. de Port Royal*, vol. iv, ch. vi.

† Levesque de Burigny says that Cospéan introduced them to each other (*Vie de Bossuet*, p. 15).

‡ Serrant: *L'Abbé de Rancé et Bossuet*, p. 28.

dialogue actually took place or not, it indicates the standard of conduct held by Rancé himself and by many others like him. The flow of words came easily and it was pleasant to be the centre of an admiring crowd, but he had been born into the class which claimed amusement and self-indulgence as a right, and he saw no reason to check his natural instincts because family calculations had made him into a clerk and not a soldier. Yet for a moment the thought of priesthood sobered him. Family interest had obtained permission from the Pope for his ordination before he had attained the necessary age, but he hesitated, as though his natural levity were paralyzed by the prospect of that great responsibility. It was for a moment only. His natural gifts were just those most likely to attract the highest honours and dignities the Church could bestow, and it was folly to stumble at the step that was a necessary preliminary to their achievement.

When Bossuet, gravely reflecting on possibilities of future usefulness, retired to quiet study and work at Metz, his contemporary kept himself constantly before the public. Rancé had inherited the family estate at Veretz on his father's death, and monastic revenues gave him plenty of money to spend ; he entertained largely and magnificently, and indulged his passion for horses and for hunting without stint. At the same time he contrived to maintain a reputation among serious persons, for Paris was not out of reach : he was a Canon of Notre Dame and a Doctor of the Sorbonne, and could use opportunities of intervention in ecclesiastical disputes with rare skill and diplomacy. His uncle was Archbishop of Tours and Almoner to Gaston d'Orléans, who had retired after his unfortunate connection with the Fronde rebellion to his castle of Blois, and in 1656 this appointment as Almoner was transferred to Rancé.* The office was much the same as that of domestic chaplain and was regarded as a great honour. Gaston might be in partial disgrace, but all the world remembered that for many years, until the birth of Louis XIV destroyed his

* Dubois: *Hist. de l'Abbé de Rancé*, vol. i, p. 70.

prospects, only a very feeble thread of life had divided him from the throne of France.

At this time Bossuet was not yet launched upon his career and that of Rancé was practically secure. He was not, it is true, in the good graces of Mazarin, but the Italian cardinal was not destined to be a permanent influence in France, and there was every reason for the young abbé to look forward to a brilliant future. His way and that of the Canon of Metz did not lie together, and it is probable that their acquaintance was only formal, for they belonged respectively to parties within the Church that were directly and openly antagonistic.

The influence of Vincent de Paul on the earlier period of Bossuet's ministry was extremely strong, but it would be impossible to maintain that Vincent de Paul dominated the whole of the younger generation of clergy. His standards were quite incompatible with any vestige of worldly ambition, and, long before the death of their founder, the austere example of the priests of the Mission had lost the attractiveness of novelty. The affectations of pulpit oratory which were an abomination at St. Lazare still drew large congregations in the fashionable churches, and, nearly forty years later, Fénelon declared that the young man who desired celebrity as a preacher must collect resounding phrases, but need not know their meaning ! *

It was to correct just that system of which the Abbé de Rancé was representative that M. Vincent had founded his Tuesday Conferences and the society that gathered round them, but Rancé was very far from desiring that the system to which he owed an enjoyable existence should be corrected. Towards Bossuet, his equal in age, in learning, and in ability, whose conceptions of the obligations of the priesthood differed so conspicuously from his own, it is likely that his attitude of mind was one of polite hostility. Nevertheless, though he avoided the society of serious persons and did his best to silence all suggestions of remonstrance or rebuke, his own brain was uncomfortably vigorous and apt to raise disturbing

* *Œuvres de Fénelon*, vol. xxi. p. 53.

questions. The exact motive of his conversion, when it came, has been disputed. It has been said of him by a great French critic * that " he did nothing by halves " ; he was violent in study, in talk, in preaching, in hunting. Rumour ascribed to him a passion for the well-known beauty, Madame de Montbazon, and presumably he was violent in love. She died with extreme suddenness, and the shock altered him.† An alteration had been noted earlier, however ; her death only set the seal on a gradual development.

Three years later, in 1660, Rancé watched the slow dying of Gaston d'Orléans among the pomps and glories of the castle at Blois. That scene was an impressive sequel to the other and more ghastly vision of death, yet it is unlikely that either had much bearing on the subsequent alteration of his life. The precise point of inspiration or of motive that decides the conversion of a soul is hard to fix, and it is a temptation to the historians who treat of Rancé's early life to depict it as if a succession of lawless escapades preceded an inevitable crisis. In fact, his way of life was that of many others, and it was a way that many continued to pursue without being arrested by any melodramatic event ; indeed, the expectation of those most nearly allied to him by ties of blood or friendship was to see him an archbishop or a cardinal before he died. Moreover, the tragic end of the lady he had loved was merely one, albeit the most dramatic, of a sequence of events.‡ He was of those who are allowed to feel the Touch of God, and his real history, after that great experience, is a gradual progress in submission.

This is not the place to follow him in his difficult return to the life of self-discipline and order which was his obligation as a priest. He needed guidance, and at first he sought it among the veterans of the Port Royal school of thought. The violence of his revolt against his own misdoing prepared him for the rigorous teaching

* Sainte-Beuve: *Hist. de Port Royal*, vol. iv, p. 45.
† Serrant: *op. cit.*, p. 45.
‡ Gervaise: *Vie de l'Abbé de Rancé*, p. 141.

with regard to penitence which was the leading characteristic of Jansenist doctrine, and it would have been a natural sequel to his spiritual experiences if he had joined himself to the little group of Hermits of Port Royal. The fact that he did not do so is a testimony to the supernatural strength of the vocation of a Religious, for in other directions he conformed to the searching demands of Jansenist guides and was as violent in repentance as he had been in all other departments of life. Early in 1657 he was still associated with the gayest society in Paris. Only three years later he had decided to dispose of all his possessions and revenues, with the exception of those that came from the Monastery of La Trappe and his Priory at Boulogne, at which last place he intended to use his right of residence. In 1660, when he was occupied with the settlement of his affairs, he lodged with the Oratorians in the Rue St. Honoré, close to the Louvre and therefore close to Bossuet's abode.* Bossuet had constant relations with the Oratorians, and the immense alteration in Rancé disposed of the barrier of fundamental disagreement which had formerly made friendship between the two an impossibility. For both of them, in differing ways, the future was undecided, but long life awaited both, and the alliance of mutual love and reverence, founded between them as youth developed into maturity, was destined to continue unbroken while life lasted.

In his sermons of 1661 and 1662 Bossuet dwells specially on the necessity of penitence and on the practical change in conduct without which penitence is ineffective.† During those years such a living exposition of the practice of penitence was unfolding itself before his eyes as must, by force of contrast, have robbed the lukewarm methods of prudent persons of all semblance of reality. "At first," said Rancé, looking back on his conversion, "my intentions went no further than a harmless life in the country: but God showed me that more was

* Serrant: *op. cit.*, p. 62.

† *See* especially sermon for first Sunday in Lent, No. 4 (*Œuvres*, vol. ix, p. 57).

required of me, and that a calm and peaceful life such as I pictured was not suited to one whose youth had been abandoned to the spirit of the world and its evil doing." *

The real key to his strange history lies in the phrase "God showed me." His example was not one to be upheld for imitation in its detail, his experience was individual to himself, yet his theory of life might safely be applied to all conditions, for he held that to those who honestly desire it God's direction is made clear, and that a man who hears the Divine Command has no further possibility of choice.

La Trappe,† of which monastery he was secular abbot, had been founded in 1140. He had enjoyed its revenues for nearly thirty years and had never disturbed himself about its condition. According to the custom of the time he was not blameworthy on this account ; such posts had long been sinecures, granted by royal favour, and many a priest living a good and useful life of service to the Church depended for subsistence on a religious house which he never visited. But the Monastery of Notre Dame de la Trappe had become a centre of brigandage and evil living ‡ and an open scandal in the neighbourhood, and rumour regarding it became so insistent that its abbot was forced to leave the austere retirement of his Priory at Boulogne and embark upon a personal inquiry. He went there in August 1662, and he found conditions which justified the most sensational of tale-bearers.

There are some great leaders of the Church of whom it can be said that they were marked for the priesthood from their cradle : of such are St. François de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, and Bossuet himself. It is impossible to think of them as fulfilling any other vocation ; all their endowment of gifts and qualities tends towards the one object. But Armand de Rancé belonged to a wholly different type. Nature had equipped him to be a soldier and a sportsman, and his natural tendencies

* Sainte-Beuve: *Port Royal*, vol. iv, ch. v.
† In Normandy, between Mortagne and Aigle.
‡ Dubois: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 212.

continued to express themselves in his methods and actions through all the years after his conversion till his death. The situation at La Trappe gave scope for capacities which had long been lying fallow, for it demanded courage, initiative, and swift decision. The little company who inhabited the ruinous monastery were in league with the band of outlaws in the surrounding forests, and it might have appeared a somewhat hopeless enterprise for a single individual, coming suddenly upon the scene, to insist upon obedience to monastic rule. Rancé was evidently quite indifferent to threats of personal violence, and among those with whom he had to deal such indifference was a most valuable asset : he refused offers of assistance and protection, and fought his battle in his own way with the rebel monks, who legally owed him obedience, until he won it. They recognized in him a recklessness that matched their own, but it was a recklessness that had been sanctified, and, eventually, they bowed before him. Bossuet, under the same circumstances, would unquestionably have taken the wiser and more certain course towards the achievement of his desired object, and have laid the case before the proper authorities in Paris. Rancé staked credit, authority, and life itself, and, if he had lost, the position would have been far more difficult to deal with by reason of his attempt at intervention.

When the battle was won its results needed consolidation, and there was no further question of a future of monastic quiet at Boulogne ; the ruins of La Trappe had to be made habitable and monks of the same Order established in community with the repentant rebels to institute the observance of the Rule. The way of the reformer was not a smooth one, but the original contest had aroused all the natural ardour of his temperament and his zeal increased with every difficulty. In his vision La Trappe was to be restored to the position which it had held in bygone times as a perpetual witness to the power of the Religious Life at its purest, and he himself, having done his part, was to live under its shadow and

share in the blessing on the life of prayer maintained within its walls. Obviously the vision was incomplete. It may be arguable that a section of the human race is set apart by Nature to fill the office of spectator towards the rest, but Rancé had no place within that section. Perhaps if he looked back to the hour of his conversion and realized that every possession or employment which was then dear to him had been renounced, it may have seemed that the command to do violence to himself had been fulfilled. He had had at all times an exaggerated shrinking from the habit of the monk and all that it implied,* and in his questionings as to the future that God intended for him he had seen this repugnance as a bar to the regular life of the cloister. He had, in fact, intended to achieve the serenity of the Religious Life without accepting its discipline. But the call that came to him through his Abbey of La Trappe was not an uncertain whisper : it was one of those claims which are, for those who have the courage and the grace to admit them, a direct gift from God. Armand de Rancé heard it and quailed before it, but, having recognized from whence it came, he obeyed promptly and unreservedly.

To carry out the purpose which grew more and more distinct in outline before his mental vision, it was necessary that he should obtain the King's permission to become a monk without relinquishing his authority as abbot. The abuse of these abbatial appointments was very convenient to a sovereign who wished to recompense a useful servant or please a favourite, and any suggestion savouring of protest with regard to them was not well received. But Rancé secured the good offices of the Queen-mother and was prudent in the statement of his case. He came to Paris on this errand in the late spring of 1663, and in the summer of that year he had entered the novitiate of the Benedictine Abbey at Perseigne.

As this spiritual drama gradually assumed definite shape Bossuet was permitted to have intimate knowledge of it. For more than thirty years after the great reform at the

* Dubois : *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 155.

with regard to penitence which was the leading characteristic of Jansenist doctrine, and it would have been a natural sequel to his spiritual experiences if he had joined himself to the little group of Hermits of Port Royal. The fact that he did not do so is a testimony to the supernatural strength of the vocation of a Religious, for in other directions he conformed to the searching demands of Jansenist guides and was as violent in repentance as he had been in all other departments of life. Early in 1657 he was still associated with the gayest society in Paris. Only three years later he had decided to dispose of all his possessions and revenues, with the exception of those that came from the Monastery of La Trappe and his Priory at Boulogne, at which last place he intended to use his right of residence. In 1660, when he was occupied with the settlement of his affairs, he lodged with the Oratorians in the Rue St. Honoré, close to the Louvre and therefore close to Bossuet's abode.* Bossuet had constant relations with the Oratorians, and the immense alteration in Rancé disposed of the barrier of fundamental disagreement which had formerly made friendship between the two an impossibility. For both of them, in differing ways, the future was undecided, but long life awaited both, and the alliance of mutual love and reverence, founded between them as youth developed into maturity, was destined to continue unbroken while life lasted.

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‡ Dubois: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 212.

did not pretend, even in that early time when the illusions and uncertainties of inexperience still remained to him, that he should choose the dying life, nor was there ever a moment when his grasp on the plans and labours he had made his own was loose or easy to detach ; but he had the power of projection into the souls of others and could draw knowledge from their experience. We find, in the sermon with which he opened his Lenten course * in the Carmelite chapel a few months later, the outline of those spiritual events which transformed the Abbé de Rancé, the favourite of the Paris salons, into the humblest of Benedictine novices. The two stages are given vividly. The first when the man who chooses sin without denying God stifles his fears by relying upon the immensity of Divine mercy. The second when, coming to himself, he can see only the immensity of Divine justice and his own deserts. It was a portrayal of the drama that had been enacted in the castle of Veretz by one who "did nothing by halves." Within those walls levity had reigned supreme until it was driven out by a despair no less undisciplined and perilous. Bossuet made it his mission to study and to clear away misconceptions that obscured the Faith in many directions, but the creed of the vague believer was even harder for his intellect to grasp than definite heresy, and it was here that Rancé, by the remembrance of personal experience, could enlighten him. In this Lenten course he denounces tolerance towards sin as a suggestion from the Evil One, yet he insists that realization of the justice of God must not be divided from the remembrance of His mercy. This was just the lesson that the world to which Rancé had belonged could not assimilate. One party grasped tolerance too readily, the other made life and death a dream of terror by visualizing justice. Among the well-dressed persons who thronged the fashionable churches there was a tendency to swing to and fro betwixt the two extremes, finding consolation in the one and novelty and sensation in the other. Bossuet, coming among them from a world

* *Œuvres*, vol. ix, p. 402. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

which was not theirs and striving to confront them with reality, was not the most popular of preachers.

In the letters of counsel and direction which belong to a later period he never appears as the advocate of violent external mortification, and his penitents are treated with invariable patience. Yet it is evident that the purest admiration of which he was capable was accorded to one who had chosen deliberately to renounce all enjoyment, and who carried the idea of the dying life so far as to declare that his monastery should be regarded as his tomb. "Jesus Christ only showed one way by which mankind might reach the joys He holds for them; it is the way of difficulty, the way of the Cross"—such was the Trappist's New Year greeting to Madame de Guise,* the daughter of his former patron, Gaston d'Orléans. Or again, in a letter to a monk, we find his summary of a Christian's duty stated yet more incisively: "The first point is to keep before you unceasingly the severity of God's judgment, and, side by side with that, His promise of eternal happiness to those who are His servants. Those who have this double vision learn to despise themselves and to have that holy hatred taught in the Gospels, and, having learnt to regard themselves as naught and of no more account than dust and ashes, they are eager to cast themselves beneath the feet of other men and to suffer quietly with patience whatever is hardest and most unwelcome. Nothing will seem too much to bear if you are sufficiently constant in your remembrance of the reward that God has promised to obedience." †

The direct simplicity of Rancé's teaching cannot be surpassed; in his mind the thought of eternity absorbed all other considerations, he saw this life as a preparation for the next, and any duties that had no immediate relation to the practice of mortification were ignored. Those who were drawn into the solitudes of La Trappe advanced, in the wake of their leader, further and further into the extremes of austerity. The quality

* Quoted Dubois: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 497.

† Rancé: *Lettres de Piété*, No. 5.

and quantity of the food were reduced until it was barely sufficient to sustain life, the silence became more complete, the manual work more arduous. War to the knife was waged against all natural human instincts, for Armand de Rancé had never been moderate in his use of any of life's gifts and he was excessive in renunciation. But he found followers as zealous as himself. To modern eyes there is a savage element in the practices of the great Trappist and his disciples, and it cannot be maintained that their life interpreted the teaching of their Master. The mission to which Rancé and his followers were called must be regarded as special to themselves—claimed of them by the generation to which they belonged. And it must be judged in relation to the other side of the picture, with remembrance of the nature and frequency of the sins for which, on behalf of others as much as for themselves, the Trappist monks continually did penance. "A miracle is required to enable a man to live like a Christian in the world" *—so wrote the Abbé de Rancé, pronouncing his considered judgment on that world of the rich and educated which was intimately familiar to him. His intention for his monks and for himself went far deeper than any outward austerity. He gave himself no quarter: "Although I profess to live the life of poverty, although I am actually poor, I have not approached that real destitution which should be mine." † Written from the silence of La Trappe by a man who had renounced every possession and allowed himself nothing but the barest necessities for the support of life, there is a terrifying suggestion in the searching of heart those words imply. And he had the power to infect others with his own spirit. The novitiate was as hard an experience as he could make it, for the novice was free to go, and he knew that only those who shared his vision of the vocation of the Trappist could persevere, and that for them no severity could be too great.

Le Camus, another celebrated convert of that generation, who is said to owe his conversion to a visit to La

* *Lettres de Piété*, No. 30. † *Ibid.*, No. 7.

Trappe,* and whose personal life, as bishop and afterwards as cardinal, was austere as that of a monk, recognized the value of the impression that La Trappe produced, and paid his tribute. "Everyone sees the marvel of it," he wrote to Antoine Arnauld, "and it makes its appeal to each one according to his temperament. I rejoiced in the silence there, but in that I found nothing astonishing. To those who have ceased to listen to the world and who are listening for the voice of God it can only be pain to speak themselves. That which made special appeal to me was the complete and unhesitating obedience to the Superior. For he is very severe with his monks and reprimands them sharply, and they accept it readily. My own pride makes this seem to me the hardest part for the natural man to bear." †

The natural man is disposed to ask why he should bear continuous humiliations and discomforts invented with the sole purpose of inflicting suffering upon him, and his reason will not supply him with an answer. Yet all the innumerable enemies that joined themselves together to crush La Trappe were powerless against the spirit that animated it. And while it is easy for the critic and the general reader to fall upon the detail of the life that was led there, and dissect it and heap contumely on its exaggerations, it must be remembered that the detail of the other life which provoked this savage protest is familiar only to the student. We may think that the human race is no nearer to dominion over sin than it was three hundred years ago; we may shrink from the vice that is rampant everywhere to-day: yet our understanding of that bygone time is inadequate because we do not realize the prevalence of black iniquity in every social grade. To enlarge on this subject would not tend to edification, nevertheless a picture of the period bears no relation to the truth if it fails to indicate the heavy shadows of depravity, that brooded over the brilliancy of the Court no less than over the taverns and gambling dens of the city.

* Dubois: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 454.

† Ingold: *Lettres du Cardinal Le Camus*, No. 51.

The men of his own generation could understand the protest of Armand de Rancé because they were face to face with the conditions that evoked it, and Bossuet was not alone in giving sympathy and applause without an endeavour towards imitation. Le Camus in his mountain diocese might emulate the austere practice of La Trappe, but a Court ecclesiastic could find many arguments to prove that mind and body should be maintained at the highest point of competence. When Bossuet lived hardly his incentive was intellectual rather than spiritual ; it was not to conform to any standard of asceticism that he kept night-watches, but because his work demanded it. Yet in his youth, before the world laid hold of him, he had grasped the fallacy of human values as clearly as did Rancé at a later time : there is evidence of that early gift of vision in his boyish *Méditation* and in his letters to Alix Clerginet. Then he had seen life as an episode and death as a goal. But his life grew full of absorbing and productive tasks and the schemes he outlined for the future took no account of death. And yet, although the years that confirmed Armand de Rancé in his folly, gave him a stronger hold on this world's wisdom, he had no moment of revulsion against La Trappe and its grim practices. Until old age descended on him he returned there when he could snatch an interval of leisure, seeking the peace that was not to be found in the midst of Court duties or controversial labour.

Chapter VII. *The Court Preacher*

IT was in 1662 that Bossuet received the royal command to preach Lent at the Louvre. The first milestone of his march towards fame had been reached on that autumn day in 1657, when Anne of Austria came to the Cathedral at Metz to hear his panegyric of St. Teresa. The famous Mission had been the immediate and direct result, and from that beginning sprang the conviction that Paris claimed his powers. Louis XIV had married Maria Teresa of Spain in 1660, but the Queen-mother had more influence than the Queen-consort, and Anne of Austria, in the evening of her turbulent life, found greater distraction in the hearing of sermons than in any Court entertainments, and was a good judge of the merits of a preacher. In 1662 it had become evident to her perceptions that the atmosphere of the Court was heavy with rumour of evil things. She was then a spectator only, but she had acquired in her many years upon the stage a keen eye for every movement of the drama. She recognized sincerity of righteousness in Bossuet, and, with a simplicity of faith which is not without pathos, she turned to him. Probably a priest of wider experience would have served her purpose better, for Bossuet in those days was striving—after the example of Vincent de Paul—to maintain mind and spirit on a level above the developments of politics or of scandal, and it was only by degrees that he gathered knowledge of the evils which the Queen-mother desired him to exorcise.

In March of the previous year (1661) Cardinal Mazarin had died. The King, kept under tutelage until then, had had leisure to study the autocratic methods of the Minister, and he seized the opportunity to assume the complete control which had long been vested in a single individual. He had been married one year and had attained the age of twenty-two. Events succeeded each other swiftly. A few weeks after the emancipation which he had achieved on the death of Mazarin, his brother married Henrietta of England, sister of Charles II, and she proved an able assistant in the altering

of Court routine to afford greater facilities for pleasure. It was the opening of a brilliant epoch in the history of the country as well as of the Court. In the years that succeeded, the army under the nominal command of the sovereign, passed from victory to victory. After the sensational downfall of Fouquet in September 1661 Colbert was given charge of finance, and because he proved himself to be a financier of irreproachable integrity the benefit of his administration was felt throughout the State. His efforts would have been unavailing, however, if Louis had contracted those lavish habits whereby he brought ruin on his people at a later time. In fact, the impression left by certain tragic hours had endured. At the time of the Fronde and afterwards the King of France may be said to have known penury, and the remembrance of that experience, so long as it remained vivid, taught him to value money. He had also a high idea of his position. In the curious "Memoirs for the Instruction of the Dauphin" composed by him before his thirtieth year, he defines regal position very clearly, and throws a certain light on the society he dominated by declaring his own estimate of his claim to domination.

"As regards himself the sovereign may be persuaded of this," he wrote, "that by reason of his superiority in rank over other men he sees everything that may occur more clearly than they can do, and therefore he should have greater confidence in his own impressions than in any evidence that comes to him from without. There are some branches of our calling in which—holding as we may be said to do the place of God—we seem to be given a share of His knowledge as well as of His authority, in such things as reading of character, in the assigning of offices, and in the granting of favours, these being matters on which our decisions have more value when we have reached them unassisted than when we have sought counsel from others—" * To this the King, whose memoir in the main was intended for his people and for posterity, appends a special note addressed

* *Mémoires de Louis XIV.* Edited C. Dreyss. Vol. ii, p. 238.

to the Dauphin. "What I have said here should claim all the closer attention from you because there is no one except myself who could discuss with you such an extremely delicate subject."

In his capacity as king, Louis believed that he possessed a measure of Divine Omniscience, as well as that supreme authority which was the right of kings, and, in part because of the success of those whom he appointed to posts of high responsibility, he was able to impose his belief upon his subjects. He was mindful of the public interest also, and introduced reforms * in the conditions of life in Paris, which were copied in the provincial towns and earned him the gratitude of honest citizens throughout the realm. In dwelling, as it is necessary to do, on that side of life in which his abuse of power is so prominent, the kingly qualities in Louis should never be forgotten. To his subjects his sins and follies were blurred by the glamour of royalty, and, even by the most censorious, the temptations of his early years of freedom must be acknowledged to have been overwhelming.

In the months before Bossuet received his first summons to the Louvre there was enacted, within half a mile of his abode in Paris, an intimate drama from which sprang a long train of events of historical and of spiritual import. In the Rue de Bouloi stood the branch house of the Carmelites, whither the Queen-consort resorted, far too frequently, to assuage her boredom and homesickness among the Spanish nuns.† A stone's throw further east was the Hôtel de Soissons, surrounded by its gardens. Here, since her marriage, dwelt Olympe Mancini,‡ niece of Cardinal Mazarin. She had been the first object of the boy-King's adoration : § she was the elder by some years, and she believed that she retained some of the

* *See* Clément : *La Police sous Louis XIV.*

† Duclos : *Madame de La Vallière et Marie Thérèse d'Autriche*, p. 205.

‡ Important to English readers as the mother of Prince Eugène. The date of her marriage is given as October 1663 by Voltaire (*Siècle de Louis XIV*, ch. xviii) ; by Madame de Motteville February 1657 (*Mémoires*, vol. iv, p. 467).

§ Madame de Motteville : *Mémoires*, vol. iv, p. 417.

power that had been hers during that childish episode. An excuse was needed to separate herself from the Court, and she found it in a quarrel * with Madame de Navailles, the first lady-in-waiting and a favourite with the two Queens. It was a propitious moment for intrigue : absolute monarchy vested in a youth of twenty-two gives scope for strange experiments, and Olympe Mancini considered the position, with all the craft her great kinsman brought to the affairs of State, and laid her plans with a skill that equalled his. The sudden impulse that will inspire the gambler to spurn the fruit of careful calculations had made Mazarin's career dramatic, and in this also his niece resembled him. Eventually her fortunes came to shipwreck, but the success that attended her first venture was quite sufficient to rob the Queen of all her happiness.

It was her intention to establish at the Hôtel de Soissons a centre of society so attractive as to outbid the Court itself and thus ensure the constant presence of the King. Henrietta of England, to her eternal dishonour, supported the scheme and so secured its success.† The harm that resulted is impossible to measure, but in extenuation of her guilt it may be urged that she was herself only a girl, heedless and pleasure-loving, and her prudish Spanish sister-in-law had failed to arouse either her affection or her loyalty. While the young Queen drooped at the Louvre in comparative solitude or sought consolation among the Carmelites of the Rue de Bouloi, a gay crowd, completely frivolous and irresponsible, followed the King and Madame to the Hôtel de Soissons. Louis was declaring his independence of that authority which his mother had striven to maintain over his private life; he defied convention in order to show that he claimed absolute liberty of action, but, in fact, when he was drawn into the net that Olympe Mancini had prepared for him, he gave himself up to a slavery from which he never escaped until his life's end. The intrigues of the Italian, according to contemporary memoirs, appear to have been

* Madame de Motteville : *Mémoires*, vol. v, p. 189.

† *Ibid.*, vol. v, pp. 198–200.

excessively complicated, and her main object of gaining personal mastery over the King's will was never achieved. Yet for a time her little court was as potent an influence as that of Madame de Rambouillet had been in the previous generation, and she ruled over a circle which was more representative of society than any that gathered at the Louvre. The first essential for fellowship with Olympe Mancini was repudiation of all accepted principles regarding truth-telling and duty. It was under her guidance that the King flung honour to the winds, and eventually Madame de Montespan reaped where she had sown. By a most singular irony of Fate, however, she herself missed all the profit of her labour; the great enterprise of the Hôtel de Soissons failed, and its mistress was defeated by a rival whose insignificance placed her beneath suspicion.

In the days when the Abbé de Rancé was Almoner to Gaston d'Orléans at Blois, one of the inmates of the castle was a young girl whose gentleness and modesty of demeanour had won special recognition from the prince.* She shared the studies and infrequent amusements of the three princesses, her contemporaries in age, and when Gaston died she went with them to Paris. She was penniless and unprotected and, after the melancholy court at Blois had broken up, her future hung in the balance until, by an unexpected twist of destiny, she was given a place as maid-of-honour in the household of the English bride, known to Court circles as Madame. Not without reason did she feel herself a favourite of Fortune, for she had little claim on so coveted an office. She was not connected with any of the great families who ruled society, she was slightly lame, and shy and retiring in manner. Indeed, it would have been hard to find another figure in the surroundings of the Court so inconspicuous as hers. Her name was Louise de La Vallière.

In judging the familiar story and its heroine it is well to remember the background. The royal mistress, herself

* Brulart de Sillery: *Vie Pénitente de Madame de La Vallière*, Introduction, p. 5.

a girl of seventeen and utterly unfitted to be regarded as leader and example to the group associated with her ; the youthful Court, more dangerous because there were as yet no open scandals to serve as warnings to the few who were really innocent ; and behind it all, presiding over the enterprise that tended most towards evil, Olympe Mancini. It seems that Madame used her maid-of-honour half as decoy and half as shield in her endeavour to establish a serious influence over the King.* He sought the society of his sister-in-law because she was beautiful and witty and high-spirited, and his Spanish wife was not amusing ; and she cherished ambitious visions of the power she might wield if she could make herself indispensable to his contentment. Madame de Soissons, as we have seen, had aspirations of a similar kind, and to neither of the two did it occur that the maid-of-honour, with her halting step and downcast eyes, was anything more than a useful supernumerary in the scenes that they devised.

It has been the custom amongst sentimental historians to depict Louise de La Vallière as a victim ; she is referred to as " a gentle lamb " and " a meek violet,"† but these terms are misleading.‡ It seems clear that she allowed herself to fall in love with the King, and it was only when an observant courtier § guessed her secret and divulged it that the attention of Louis was directed to her. Tradition says, and probably it is true, that her love was quite disconnected from the high estate of its object ; || she desired the position that afterwards was hers none the less, and became the mistress of the King with hardly less deliberation than did Madame de Montespan at a later time. And the evil of her example was only the more insidious because it was veiled with true and disinterested attachment. Insist-

* Madame de La Fayette : *Mémoires*, 2me partie.
† Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. vii, No. 848.
‡ *See* Lair, J. : *Louise de La Vallière*.
§ Anon. : *La Vie de la Duchesse* (1708), p. 92.
|| " *Elle aima le roi et non la royauté* " (Madame de Caylus : *Souvenirs*, p. 32).

ence on the naked truth of her position is desirable because the sequel of her career—that sequel with which Bossuet was so intimately associated—loses its full significance if the guilt of her years of triumph is discounted. Throughout, her history is full of curious contradictions. At first the favoured maid-of-honour had to endure every difficulty and humiliation that the wrathful ingenuity of Madame Henriette could devise, and then she found support against them in the triumph of her conquest ; yet later, when she was emancipated from service and was leading the festivities at Court and flaunting her glories before the Queen herself, she seems to have flinched from all the shameful details of her position. In fact, she had not the fibre of the successful courtesan; her happiest hours were snatched from those precarious weeks during which her romance was hidden from the world ; when she was at the highest pinnacle of her success and had surrendered openly to all the conditions of a royal favourite's existence she was frequently the prey of remorse and dark forebodings.

The Queen-mother watched with dismay the rapid growth of evil under the new régime and, seeing religion as the only remedy, fixed all her hope on Bossuet's eloquence. Certainly there was a dearth of immediate or visible result, but the effectiveness of the preacher cannot be measured by outward expression of response, and his own belief in the possibility that sermons may achieve spiritual miracles was unalterable. Indeed, his faith in the supernatural powers of a preacher was intense enough to communicate itself to others ; it was as exalted as that of Louis XIV in the estate of kings.

" O God, give power to Thy word. O God, Thou seest the place where I have been called to preach and Thou knowest what may most fittingly be said. . . . Sire, it is God that should speak from this pulpit ; may it be that by His Holy Spirit He may do so ! " *

Thus on the first Sunday in Lent 1662 did the Abbé Bossuet deliver himself in the presence of the King, and, in those years before the meshes of the Court en-

* *Œuvres*, vol. ix, p. 56.

tangled him, there are tokens that he maintained himself on a spiritual level which justified his claim to be, in this direct and literal manner, the messenger of God. Probably among those whom he addressed there were very few who scoffed at religion ; unbelief in those days was rare, nor did the fever of excitement in which men lived unfit them to receive a strong impression from an unexpected quarter. It was not impossible that, from the glowing reality of the preacher's faith, a ray of light might pierce the slumbering conscience of one or another among his hearers. The difficulties to be overcome were grave ; the magnificent persons who gathered in the royal chapel to listen to the new preacher were quite aware that socially he was a nonentity and had no connection with their world ; they would listen therefore with reservations. And besides that barrier of rank, which the tradition of that time and that country made so particularly formidable, there was an actual and inevitable lack of mutual understanding. Bossuet acknowledged always that the sense of response from among his hearers affected him, but there was little hope of response from minds that were occupied with memories of wild revels in the park at Fontainebleau, or with speculation as to the newest excitement at the Hôtel de Soissons. In such an atmosphere it was a bold measure to insist that the attendance at sermons had a sacramental aspect, and to assure his auditors that if their lives bore no witness to their hearing of the word of God they were guilty of sacrilegious sin.* That was not a convenient doctrine when his audience included the King and Madame and the reckless throng that followed them, and it could not be made to accord with accepted standards. Moreover, in conjunction with actual events it was dangerously near to the ridiculous, for everybody knew that the reason of the absence of the King on one of the days of sermon was his pursuit of Louise de La Vallière to a convent outside Paris where she had taken refuge.

That incident in itself was tawdry and discreditable. The scorn and dislike of Madame for her maid-of-honour

* *Œuvres*, vol. ix, p. 116.

had combined with the despair of a lovers' quarrel to make life intolerable,* and Louise had fled on foot by the way that leads along the river's bank to Chaillot, where an obscure convent allowed her shelter in an outer parlour. Doubtless, in the midst of her agitation and distress, she knew her power, and had no real doubt that the King himself would follow and make her escapade a nine-days' wonder. That he did so is a matter of history, and thus a topic was provided for the Court that was far more productive of reflection and discussion than any of the suggestions of a Lenten preacher. The capacity to maintain an undisturbed demeanour in the midst of adverse influences is a valuable asset to a public man, and Bossuet proved his possession of it on this occasion. His tenacity regarding any belief he had once accepted aided him, for his theory of a preacher's function had become part of his faith in his own vocation.† The indifference of his hearers did not lessen his responsibility for the delivery of the message entrusted to him, and the nature of that message is more important to his personal history than any evidence regarding its results. He was prominent as a preacher for a period which is small in comparison to his length of life, and it is plain that his contemporaries did not recognize his supremacy in eloquence : Bourdaloue, and even Mascaron, made stronger appeal to the public taste.‡ Nevertheless, the study of his sermons is the surest guide to appreciation of the greatness of his thought. As writer, as controversialist, as politician, his pursuit of a fixed idea placed him on occasions at a disadvantage, but as preacher he used the means most adequate to the fulfilment of his purpose. His great gift came to maturity during the years in Paris. The sermons that belong to his period of apprenticeship at Metz contain the exaggerations of

* Anon, : *La Vie de la Duchesse* (1708), p. 125.

† *Cf.* Lebarq : *Hist. Crit.*, p. 357. "*Tout sermon était pour lui un acte essentiellement sacerdotale.*"

‡ For summary of evidence on this point *see* Hurel : *Orateurs Sacrés*, vol. i, pp. 206–224. The refutation of Lebarq is inconclusive. *See op. cit.*, pp. 212, 330, 357, etc.

phrase and figure that are characteristic of youthful ardour ; they show also that he was not wholly exempt from the influence of that fashion of classical allusion and quotation which in the earlier decades of the seventeenth century made pulpit oratory absurd.* It was only when his life in Metz, and the many occupations involved by his position there, were left behind that he could concentrate on self-development. Not until then does he seem to have realized his need of discipline in the use of language and imagination. It is clear that he owed nothing to his immediate predecessors ; † it was on classic models that he desired to form himself. The Memoir of Ledieu tells us ‡ that in his youth it was his practice to learn passages of Cicero by heart, and we have his own testimony as to his methods, in that study on the art of oratory which he composed in 1669 at the request of the young Cardinal de Bouillon.§ " Whatever I have learnt of style," he says, " has come from books in Latin and a little from the Greek . . . from Cicero, chiefly from *de Oratore* and from the volume called *Orator*. In this I find the examples of eloquence of greater use than any directions it contains." Passing on from these indications as to the choice of models, he discovers in a phrase the secret of his own peculiar excellence. " There is nothing so essential to the mastery of style as complete understanding of the subject treated and the possession of wide knowledge. Cicero requires of his orator *multarum rerum scientiam*."

When Bossuet preached, " the subject treated " was always the doctrine of the Church in one or another of its aspects. The practice of analyzing character and exposing the ugliness of familiar sins, in which Bourdaloue became so proficient, did not commend itself to Bossuet as holding the promise of permanent result. He said once, after many years' experience, that he had

* For examples *see* Vaillant : *Études sur les Sermons de Bossuet*, pp. 148–152.

† *See* Gandar : *Bossuet Orator*, p. 11.

‡ Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 15.

§ Floquet : *Etudes*, vol. ii, pp. 515–524.

observed the readiness with which a man would acknowledge his own resemblance to the sinner a preacher was describing, and, having in this way admitted his misdoing, would feel the subject closed.* These studies in human nature, coupled with a direct appeal to the individual conscience, were very moving and drew large congregations, but Bossuet could not have made use of them and remained true to himself. His own faith was as a fire that burned within him and he sought to impose the same conviction of the truth on the minds of others. His diligent study of the Fathers during his years at Metz served him in good stead, and the Bible was always his constant and most familiar reading. No man since St. Paul himself has "preached Christ" more emphatically or more assiduously, for no elaboration of reasoning or flight of eloquence could draw him very far from the actual sayings and example of Jesus. Whether or no he was right in his aphorism regarding the foundation of style, it is clear that for his own part he united with his mastery of words and argument and imagery, a familiarity with his subject that was the fruit of long meditation : therefore as an exponent of the doctrine of the Church he has no rival. It has been said by a great student of his work that, while no one was more thorough in giving proof of an assertion, he never multiplied arguments ; those that he used were so conclusive that few were needed.†

It was a part of his strength that his faith was unwavering and unalterable, but, in a world where heresy and indifference were so prevalent, it set him apart from others and induced that sense of intellectual dominance which proved so great a snare to him in later years. While he preached in Paris, however, he was intent on imparting those essentials of belief, which he regarded as the sure foundation for conversion, to the heedless throng gathered in church or chapel. He knew that they had no desire for his teaching ; nevertheless he held that the Grace of God might use some fragment of his message against the intention of those who listened.

* *Œuvres*, vol. viii, p. 357. † Lebarq : *op. cit.*, p. 85.

For many it may have been so ; the careless hearing that they gave him may have borne fruit in after years, and for some his words, recalled in a moment of revelation or of disillusion, held a prophetic meaning. To Louise de La Vallière, for instance, fresh from that hour of triumph in the bare convent parlour at Chaillot, when the most magnificent of kings had thrown aside prudence and state and ceremony for love of her, the story of the Prodigal Son and the exhortation attached to it was a subject very far off from interest or personal application. Yet twenty years later, looking back to that Sunday at the Louvre, she might have found her own strange experience summed up in a single phrase of the preacher as he described the Prodigal's return : " Plunged by unlawful pleasure into an abyss of misery it was *through this misery itself* that he found his way to the reality of happiness." *

As the days and weeks went on, his sense of each individual listener as a soul in need of saving grew stronger, and a nebulous theory of the perils of the Court crystallized into definite knowledge of actual sin. United with his logic and his common sense he had the artist's vision—a power as precious in the spiritual as in the natural world. He saw sin shadowing each one, and he knew that the forms it was taking were not less loathsome because the men were brave fighters and skilful sportsmen, and the women as witty and accomplished as any that the world produced. And as yet the glamour of the Court had not dulled his ardour for the conquest of individual souls. That year at Easter the King did not receive the Blessed Sacrament, and his abstention, though it was but a twisted tribute to the Lenten preacher, implied an awakening to reality. Sin was not routed, but it was revealed.

It is hard to form any true estimate of a character without knowledge of the influences to which it surrenders or gives battle, and ordinary historical reading throws little light on the conditions to which Bossuet had to adapt his energies and his ideals. " A miracle is needed to make the life of a Christian possible in the

* *Œuvres*, vol. x, p. 201.

world," Rancé had said. Bossuet aspired to be the medium through whom such miracles might come to pass, and so was brought into close contact with a world where vice was common and accepted. To exhort and admonish sinners is a duty that may be performed without danger ; but to live in their midst, to receive friendly advances from them with respect and gratitude, to see what they are while making an appearance of accepting them as that which they pretend to be—these things can hardly be done with complete impunity, and it was these things that Bossuet, in the later development of his destiny, was called upon to do.

In the Advent of 1665 and in the succeeding Lent, a period shadowed by the illness and death of the Queen-mother, Bossuet preached again at Court. This second opportunity of winning the King's approval and assuring his future fortunes was not used with greater prudence than the first. His sermon for the first Sunday in Advent (which at its close was addressed directly to the King)* was a warning of such solemnity that the idlers, obliged by etiquette to share in religious exercises patronized by the sovereign, had just cause for resentment. His insistence on the folly of spiritual somnolence savoured of personal attack, and his daring carried him so far beyond the limits of propriety that rank was no protection. The King himself was warned that all his recent triumphs would bring no lasting glory if the need for personal well-doing was ignored. And the King, in the insolence of his magnificent youth, had imposed his conception of himself upon society until his sins, being royal, had part in the admiration accorded to him. If, as tradition says, society failed to accord to the audacious orator the appreciation that he merited, the reason is sufficiently obvious.

Yet by a curious chance society itself, from its innermost circle, furnished an illustration of an uncomfortable truth which should not be unduly emphasized within hearing of well-bred ears. On the third Sunday in Advent there was no sermon in the royal chapel because

* *Œuvres*, vol. viii, p. 92.

His Majesty had given the Abbé Bossuet permission to obey a call to the bedside of a young courtier, a victim of smallpox and at the point of death.* The dying man was Gaston de Foix, duke and peer of France. To console him in his last hours Bossuet braved the peril of infection and missed an occasion of filling the coveted position of Court preacher. His absence and the reason for it should have served the purpose of a sermon and have given new force to his message when he reappeared; there is no evidence, however, of any awakening of sleeping souls in answer to his summons.

If he hoped to strike at the conscience of the fair-haired girl who at that moment represented the reign of open immorality at Court, he failed signally ; triumph was dominating shame in her just then, and the hour of her awakening was still far distant. Yet each one of the series of his sermons before these infatuated triflers was so charged with the most solemn appeal, that the hidden work begun in the Lent of 1662 went on. And there was one among them, at any rate, who did not find it easy to evade the challenge of which Bossuet was the bearer. Henrietta of England, that imperious rebel, had very few rivals in wit and understanding, and the magic of perfect diction and flawless argument is more effectual with vigorous minds than with the duller-witted. She listened unwillingly to the eloquence of this *bourgeois* priest to whom her mother-in-law had given such unnecessary prominence, but her intellect could not refuse response to his, and when Advent and Lent were over his name did not fade from her memory, in spite of the manifold schemes and disappointments which occupied her. For it was destined, in her case as in that of Louise de La Vallière, that he should play the leading part in the scene that was the climax of her life, and the immortality of her name is chiefly due to him.

At this period a vehement attack on sin in high places was giving scope to that fighting spirit in him which later was absorbed by controversy. There were times when his words seemed to denote a zeal so fiery that all

* Levesque de Burigny : *Vie de M. Bossuet*, p. 63.

false splendours must perforce be shrivelled by it. And, as he knew, lurking behind the splendour, there were evil things ill-suited for exposure.

"There is a God in Heaven who is able to punish a people for their misdoing, but most surely does He punish kings who sin against Him. It is at His bidding that I speak as I am doing, and if Your Majesty will but listen for His Voice it will reveal that which men are not allowed to say." * Only the daring of an immense conviction could have framed such words for the hearing of Louis XIV, and the man who could speak them was not careful of his own interests.

For more than three years after this Lenten course in the royal chapels Bossuet had no direct or official connection with the Court, and a considerable portion of his time was spent at Metz. The death of Anne of Austria in January 1666 lessened his chances of important preferment, and it is noteworthy that he received no invitation to deliver either of the official Funeral Orations. The following January he preached an anniversary sermon in the Carmelite Convent, Rue de Bouloi, but this opportunity, so long after the event he celebrated, did not call out his latent powers. His fortunes at that period were by no means assured ; a single pamphlet represented his literary output, and there was a note of uncertainty in the admiration accorded to his efforts as a preacher. This being so, it is not extravagant to surmise that, if Marshal Turenne had remained obdurate in adherence to his Protestant convictions, Bossuet would never have surmounted the parapet of royal indifference which lay between his projects of usefulness and their fulfilment. But he had the credit of accomplishing that which the King desired, and his reward, though it was not immediate, came to him at length. He was staying with Dominique de Ligny, Bishop of Meaux, on September 8, 1669,† when he received dispatches with the Royal Seal. They contained his nomination to the bishopric of Condom and a

* *Œuvres*, vol. ix, p. 252.

† Réaume : *Hist. de Bossuet*, vol. i, p. 382.

command to preach the Advent sermons before the Court. It was vain to seek opportunities of public service without the sanction of the King, and it was Bossuet's aim, within the compass of his spiritual vocation, to be the servant of his country ; therefore he welcomed this token of the King's approval. There was nothing dazzling in the distinction, however. He was forty-two, and many men with not a tithe of his capacity were in possession of important bishoprics at five-and-twenty. Nevertheless Condom, though it was a distant diocese, gave him the secure position which he needed, and thenceforward all that he said or wrote acquired a new authority.

Ten years of work in Paris, without diminishing his zeal, had modified his aim. Gradually the paucity of triumphs in his crusade against the wickedness of the world must have been forced on his perceptions, and in his judgment of human questions he was eminently practical. He had learnt that no open attack, however well conceived or bravely carried out,would win success against such forces of evil as were ranged against him ; he saw the need for strategy, and by the adoption of new methods he entered upon new conditions. His service did not slacken, but his place in these new fields of labour could not be reconciled with those austere ideals with which St. Vincent had imbued him. In his last Advent course before the Court there is evidence of the change that had come to pass. The change does not necessarily imply deterioration—as a whole these sermons represent his highest level as a preacher—but it shows the degree to which he could adapt himself to fresh standards when there was sufficient warrant for readjustment.

The scandals of the Court were black enough in the Advent of 1665. In the four years that ensued they grew tenfold blacker. The death of the Queen-mother removed the only check upon the freedom of the King, and, while he claimed to legislate for the lives of others and to decide on fashions and opinions, for himself he recognized no law. In the days of that first romance with Louise de La Vallière it was legitimate to hope that he

might still be touched by words of counsel and appeal. Four years later all romance had been submerged in the tide of open licence, and the arrogant defiance of the King's attitude removed him beyond all human methods of attack.

For Bossuet there was no solace save in pious hopes. "God grant that at the Last Day our mighty King may be beside St. Louis, who with outstretched arms will draw him to his place. God grant that place may not remain vacant—" * His Advent series contains nothing more personal to the King than this.

The main theme chosen for his last connected course of sermons was the failure of professing Christians and the spiritual incoherence from which such failure springs. His thought has borne the test of time and is well worthy of study in the present day. When he opened the series, at the All Saints festival, he struck the solemn note which called his hearers to consider the sacramental nature of his office and their own. "It is I who speak to you. It is I who warn you. It is I who claim your attention; but in secret the voice of Truth is speaking in my inmost being and equally to you; if this were not so all my words would be but a vain beating of the air. Outwardly I speak and you listen, but inwardly in the secret of our hearts you and I alike are listening to the Truth which is speaking to us and teaching us." † He had never before approached them with the same intimate touch. In fact, four years had increased his knowledge and he had learnt that sympathy might serve his purpose better than denunciation: "You spend your life at Court, and without attempting to enter upon the details of that condition I will assume that life seems to you a pleasant thing; but presumably you are not so unmindful of the tempest, by which these waters are so often lashed, as to rely absolutely on the continuance of your happiness. There is nothing on earth in which we place our trust which does not hold the possibility of failing us, which may not turn into unalleviated bitterness. Pleasure! where will you lead us? How far must we go in forget-

* *Œuvres*, vol. viii, p. 130. † *Ibid.*, p. 36.

fulness of God and of ourselves? What disaster and downfall lie ahead?"

In the month between All Saints and the beginning of Advent Bossuet was frequently at St. Cloud, the palace of Philippe d'Orléans, at the invitation of Madame. One of the advantages of association with this gifted lady and her circle was the intimate knowledge that it gave him of the Court. Hitherto it had not been easy for him to obtain such knowledge, yet it was essential to the full usefulness of a Court preacher. At that period the most interesting part in the social drama was sustained by Madame de Montespan. To the initiated she was known as the rival of Louise de La Vallière, to the world in general she appeared as a favourite companion to the Queen. And as the qualification indispensable to a favourite of the Queen was religious fervour,* Madame de Montespan displayed unflagging ardour in the practice of the Catholic Faith.†

Bossuet, enlightened by Madame, regarded demonstrations of piety at Court with new understanding. The result of his observations was a sermon on Hypocrisy on the first Sunday in Advent. Dexterity was needed to avoid alienating his listeners at the outset, and he began by picturing the peril incurred by unbelievers. Thus he secured the sympathetic attention of an audience whose orthodoxy was unimpeachable and could launch the warning that applied to them. When he denounced hypocrisy he was denouncing the men and women of polite society: "They believe that God exists, but they regard Him as so unimportant that they are heedless of their conduct when He alone is witness." ‡

From the falsehood of loose profession he passed to that of minute observances which drew superstition into indissoluble alliance with hypocrisy. Among rich and poor alike he had seen the tendency to use prayer as a charm: an attempt to force God to conform His will to that of mankind. "We bargain with the saints as

* Madame de Sévigné: *Lettres*, vol. ii, No. 143.
† Marquis de la Fare: *Mémoires*, p. 164 (Petitot, 2me série, vol. 65).
‡ *Œuvres*, vol. viii, p. 119.

with ordinary people, whose favours we expect to win by paying them regular attention and doing little services for them continually. . . . The need of religion is so firmly fixed in the heart of man that the Enemy of the human race cannot uproot it. Therefore he seeks to divert it from its natural growth and transform it into a dangerous pastime, assuring us that by these little tricks we are fulfilling the solemn claims that our religion makes upon us." *

And here, face to face with the shams lurking among pious practices and the effrontery of open wickedness, the tone of calm remonstrance, with which Bossuet began his course, is shaken. It was John the Baptist whom he evoked in the two sermons which conclude his career as Court preacher. It was the clarion voice of a prophet that was needed to proclaim the certainty of God as Judge and Saviour ; he recognized that the disease had gone too far for his learning or his oratory to check its progress. " Sin is the greatest and the most fatal of all troubles. Assuredly we are deceived at the outset if we imagine that the spirit of penitence can survive in the midst of this eternal rattle of the Court to which we abandon our whole existence." † Such was his concluding warning, and it implies that salvation might not be found at Court. Logically it needed to be qualified, for all men cannot retire from the world ; but in fact, as he well knew, there was little danger that his hearers would carry their zeal to any uncomfortable extremes. " We do not care as much as that about salvation ; we do not set as high a price as that upon our souls." ‡

That note of irony, rare on Bossuet's lips, is the one on which his utterance as Court preacher ceases finally. Before another Advent season a new employment had claimed him, and that vocation which for sixteen years he had regarded as peculiarly his own was forced into the background of his life. We do not know what valuation he set upon his own achievement during that

* *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 60.
† *Ibid.*, vol. viii, p. 210.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. viii, p. 230.

period. Reading in these days the record of his spoken words, his countrymen accord him a pre-eminence as orator that admits no rival. But it was the vigour of his fight against the Protestants which had earned for him the favour of the King, not his distinction as a preacher. The discourse of men less gifted won fuller measure of applause from his contemporaries.

Chapter VIII. *The Priest at Court*

A FEW days after Bossuet's appointment to the See of Condom the Court went into mourning for the widow of Charles I. Henrietta Maria, daughter of Henri IV, had taken refuge in France when she escaped from the rebels in 1647, and, with only one interval, had remained there in seclusion ever since. Henrietta of England, afterwards known as Madame, her youngest child, had been brought up under her personal supervision, and the mother and daughter were on terms of real affection. The widowed Queen had found consolation in religion. She was staying at the Visitation Convent at Chaillot, of which she was the foundress, when she received the news of the execution of Charles I,* and it was at this convent that Bossuet came in touch with her. On July 2, 1660, the special Feast Day of the Order, he was invited to preach at Chaillot in her presence. Throughout his life the enterprise of St. François de Sales and of Ste. Chantal made strong appeal to him, and he showed then how fully he had entered into the spirit of the Visitation.† After that sermon the Queen was numbered among those who recognized his genius as an orator, and this recollection so influenced her daughter's choice that he was invited to deliver a Funeral Oration at Chaillot. The invitation did not imply any immense advance in the esteem of the great ones of the earth. It was a compliment to be asked to preach on the occasion of the death of a princess of France, but many sermons were preached on such occasions and the ceremony in the convent chapel at Chaillot had slight importance.

Fortunately Bossuet did not proportion his use of energy and power to the outward significance of his task. He seems to have possessed that rare species of simplicity which accepts each claim as it occurs, and makes of it the one thing vital to existence, without calculation of values and results. We have seen that the ideal he set before him was that of a person who does " all things with energy because it is the will of God that nothing should

* *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 193, *note*.

† *Ibid.*, vol. xi, p. 196.

be done listlessly ; moreover, he carries out all undertakings as Divine Commands and not to give satisfaction to himself or others." * Doubtless he would have preferred to be the special preacher at Notre Dame or St. Denis, but he was not less careful in preparation because his words were to go no further than the limits of the little convent chapel at Chaillot.

The custom of commemorating by an elaborate panegyric was not one which he approved,† and when he complied with it he was always careful to obtain an authentic outline of the life which was his appointed theme.‡ On this occasion Madame de Motteville, who was the confidante of so many august personages, supplied him, and his summary of the chequered career of the ill-fated Queen was drawn from her memoir.§

" These panegyrics seem to have been instituted mainly out of ostentation and frivolity, and this is the reason they are difficult. . . . They demand from an orator all his art and all the powers of his eloquence, otherwise he fails in his undertaking and disappoints the expectations of his hearers." This is the criticism of one of the most successful of Bossuet's predecessors,|| and to a disciple of Vincent de Paul the difficulties were deeper. A Funeral Oration which was not susceptible to the reproach of artificiality was an impossibility : it was of its very nature artificial in idea and in method. Nevertheless it was the Funeral Oration for Henrietta Maria in the chapel of the Visitation nuns, which first made Bossuet famous as an orator. It secured for him also the confidence of Madame, and his association with her was of infinite importance to the moulding of his fortunes.

Fate was unkind to Henrietta Queen of England, but it dealt more cruelly still with her daughter and namesake, Henrietta Duchess of Orleans. If the testimony of innumerable contemporaries can be accepted,

* *See* p. 48. † *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 666.

‡ *Revue Bossuet* (1902), p. 30.

§ *See* A. Hurel : *Orateurs Sacrés*, vol. ii, appendix vi (original memoir in Archives Nationales, Paris).

|| Ogier : *Actions Publiques*, preface (1652).

the English princess was endowed with very unusual gifts of personal charm and beauty, in addition to the keen intelligence which promised to make of her the heroine of diplomacy. But she was wedded at seventeen to a prince whose unworthiness increased as his age advanced, and plunged into an atmosphere that poisoned all who dared to breathe it freely. The natural tendencies of the great-grandchild of Mary Stuart, who was also grandchild of Henri IV, were not in the direction of self-restraint, and for some years she lived dangerously, acknowledging no law save that of her royal dignity. It was an aggravation of her peril that she had a bishop as adviser, confidant, and devoted friend. Of Daniel de Cosnac, Bishop of Valence, Almoner to Monsieur, Saint-Simon says that "No man was so fitted for intrigue or had keener vision, unscrupulous withal and infinitely ambitious." * With a high-placed ecclesiastic always in attendance her spiritual opportunities were peculiarly circumscribed. If it had not been for a violent crisis in the miserable history of her life with her husband, which resulted in the exile of Cosnac, the place that Bossuet was to fill would not have been left vacant. Nevertheless, despite his cunning and his cynicism, the Bishop of Valence was probably the most trustworthy adviser that Madame could have chosen from her immediate circle,† for his attachment to her was stronger than self-interest, and he knew the world in which her lot was cast as a better man could not have done. In fact, the moral corruption that was prevalent had so forced itself upon her personal knowledge that she shrank from it in horror, and it was championship of her at a dark moment in her history that brought Cosnac to disgrace. At the most perilous moment in her relations with her husband he was exiled.

It is needless to pursue that grimy history in detail: "The princess wept very often," says her chronicler.‡ During the period of ceremonial mourning for her

* Saint-Simon: *Mémoires*, vol. viii, p. 277.

† Princess Palatine: *Correspondance*, vol. i, p. 243.

‡ Cosnac: *Mémoires*, vol. ii, p. 214.

mother she sent for Bossuet.* Until the close of that year he visited her constantly at St. Cloud, and when she moved to the Palais Royal in the spring of 1670 he went to her every week. In the desolation of bereavement and solitude she was craving knowledge of the other Kingdom which, four years earlier, when he had pressed the actuality of its existence upon an unresponsive Court, had seemed so lacking in attraction. How far a desire for novelty, and for the intellectual stimulus of conversation with Bossuet, prompted her inquiries it is impossible to judge. They were interrupted by a visit to England as the guest of her brother, Charles II, on which she acted as secret envoy from the King of France, and proved her skill in statecraft. She returned to the prospect of a life such as she had coveted in earlier days ; a life full of possibilities of influence and of visible favour with the King.† A fortnight after her return she was seized with sudden illness and died in a few hours.

" If she has found mercy with God it must be by His very special grace "—was the comment of Le Camus, who had shared as a Court ecclesiastic in the wild pleasures of her circle—" for her way of living made her conversion difficult." ‡ Bossuet's vision of her, however, was less sombre. He had been waiting till the untoward distraction caused by her journey became less engrossing, and she should once again stretch out a groping hand to him, for guidance towards the goal which she had begun dimly to perceive. Instead, from the throes of an agonizing death she called to him.

" She was the only person of her rank who knew how to recognize real merit "—such was the lament of a courtier § when she died, and the claim she made on Bossuet was proof that to him she accorded something more definite than vague approval. She had, indeed, discerned those qualities that give support when life's foundations crumble. She must have been present

* Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 128.
† Marquis de la Fare : *Mémoires*, p. 177.
‡ Ingold : *Lettres du Cardinal Le Camus*, No. 13.
§ Marquis de la Fare : *Mémoires*, p. 182.

many times when he had threatened the indifferent with the vengeance of an offended Deity, but, however violent might be the ardour of his warning, he was insistent always on the certainty of mercy from a Heavenly Father to a repentant child. And she had dire need of that assurance. She was at St. Cloud and he in Paris when she was taken ill, and her attendants summoned M. Feuillet, a Jansenist preacher who was near at hand.* The Jansenist did not spare her. Her protest that the pain was beyond endurance provoked the celebrated comment : " You have been sinning against God for twenty-six years and you have only begun your penance during the last six hours."

If the coming of Bossuet had not been hastened by the King the grim tragedy of Madame's end would be unrelieved, for her body was racked by extremity of pain and there was no promise of comfort for her spirit.

He arrived in time, however. " Madame, take courage," he said as he drew near.

She turned her head towards him as she answered : " It does not fail me. I am ready to die. I surrender to God. I desire whatever He wills. I hope in His mercy."

Bossuet, kneeling down, bade her join in his prayer for pardon by the Blood of Christ. He reminded her that if God insisted on justice we could expect nothing but Hell, but she could be assured of mercy if she put all her confidence in her Saviour.

" My heart knows it is so," she whispered.

" You see "—he said—" you see what the world is worth ; you see it for yourself, are you not fortunate that God is calling you away from it ? "

And those who looked on realized that Madame, by a miracle of grace, could follow and assent.

He was gentle with her—pausing lest he should weary her, but she wished him to continue. As he gave her the Crucifix he said : " Here is Jesus Christ holding out His arms to you, Madame ; here is He Who can

* *See* Hurel : *op. cit.*, vol. ii, appendix vii (description of death of Madame written by Feuillet from MS. Bib. Nat.).

give you eternal life and will raise up the body which has suffered so intensely."

And she answered, "Credo, *Credo !*"

As the last agony approached he spoke again : "Madame, you believe in God, you hope in God, you love Him ?"

Her last words were clearly audible : "With all my heart." *

There were many spectators, but the actors in that scene soared above drama—it was child-like in its simplicity. The extraordinary capacity for concentration which was so strong an element of Bossuet's genius was his in his spiritual function. He shared the last hours of the dying woman : while they lasted the unknown future that awaited her was near to him, he felt the approach of death as he knelt beside her bed, the thought of her possessed him to the exclusion of all other ; and she was comforted.

But there is the suggestion of anti-climax in the sequel. The death of Madame struck at many of those who were near to her as a summons from the voice of God. Bossuet was fully alive to the possibilities of its effect. He describes in a letter,† which probably was addressed to his brother, his interview with the King at Versailles the day of the tragedy. "The King had tears in his eyes and was ready to seek a lesson for himself in this terrible occurrence. I made the suggestions that should come from a priest under such circumstances. M. le Prince (Condé) received what I said to him very warmly, and told me that the King was greatly impressed and the whole Court had been edified. I have received an order from His Majesty to preach the funeral sermon at St. Denis."

The passage is disconcertingly professional. His ministration at the deathbed of Madame had been a very real spiritual experience, but the obligations of a Court ecclesiastic were closing around him rapidly. It was his burning faith that had brought comfort to the dying

* Cosnac : *Mémoires*, vol. i, Introduction, li–liii.

† *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 38.

woman at St. Cloud : that power of vision which turns men into fanatics and helps them to be martyrs. But in Bossuet it was balanced by other powers, and, in his connection with Madame before the world, it is these other powers which are memorable. Seven weeks later, in obedience to the King's command, he preached the sermon at her funeral at St. Denis.*

It was at this moment that he may be said to have achieved assured and permanent celebrity. He, the son of a lawyer in a provincial town, with nothing to commend him to public notice save his astounding capacity for thought and speech, was the chief figure in a ceremony that was memorable throughout France and beyond its borders. He chose this opportunity to appear for the first time with all the state permitted to a bishop, preceded by heralds, omitting nothing that might exalt his dignity. On his finger there shone a magnificent emerald, and those who had inner knowledge of the Court whispered that Madame had left it to be set for him before she sailed for England, and even on her deathbed had remembered her intention. There is much to suggest that Bossuet on that great occasion was mindful of effect and by no means forgetful of himself. Perhaps the impression he desired to produce was unattainable by other means. It is interesting to observe the diverging characteristics which he displayed in his brief connection with Madame and which are immortalized in the Funeral Oration delivered from the pulpit of St. Denis. The stately panegyric with which it opened is the work of Bossuet in his character as courtier. To comply with the demand of custom he set aside his knowledge, shared with the majority of those whom he addressed, of the tormented, feverish career which had just ended. But he had skill to use the figure he had fashioned—which never did and never could have lived at St. Germain or the Tuileries—in the picture which it was his aim to set before the mourning Court. He knew the last scene might be relied on to present reality, for no invention could be more poignant in appeal than the

* *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 474.

truth as he had witnessed it. And it was on the note of sincerity that the sermon reached its climax, and there the preacher, with the true instinct of an orator, changed his tone. He had paid his tribute of lamentation, and his theme had other aspects less obvious yet equally important. The life that had just ended was as full of secret failure as it was of external glory. He had showed them the princess endowed with every grace and quality that inspires admiration. It remained to him to show the dire peril that had shadowed her until her death and was then threatening each one of the living throng who filled the Abbey Church on that august occasion.

"Self is the sole consideration, thou sayest in thy heart—I am and none else beside me.* When that is so is life anything but peril? Is not death a deliverance?" And with that momentary touch upon the truth the old ardour of his vocation took possession of the preacher and he spoke boldly, as he ought to speak. "Christians, as we pray for her soul let us give a thought to our own! For what is our conversion waiting? We must be hard of heart if such a catastrophe, which should have stirred us to the depths, proves to be merely the sensation of a moment. Are we waiting until God shall raise the dead to teach us? It is not needful that the dead return: the truths of eternity are on a firm foundation. If they fail to gain hold on us it is because we find the world absorbing; it is because we are entranced by pleasure; it is because we are enthralled by the present moment. How great is our blindness if, while we move onward unhaltingly to the end, we wait for our last moments before we accept those values which the remembrance of death should have made familiar in every hour of our lives?"

He had kept his audience spellbound, and the most censorious could not withhold their admiration. The progress of his fortunes seems to have awaited a visible triumph. Judged by the world's values this was the first great moment of his life. Yet triumphant oratory

* Isaiah, ch. xlvii, 8.

may fail where humbler efforts are successful. One listener at least waited in vain for that which her soul craved until the sermon was very near its close. Louise de La Vallière, Duchess of Vaujours and mother of children acknowledged by the King, was in dire spiritual need. She had tried to evade those long-past warnings and appeals but they were not easy to forget, for Bossuet had had the power to fix an impression on an unwilling mind. She found no parallel to her own experience in that of Mary Magdalene. She had made no choice, had never dreamed of voluntary surrender, but had waited while glowing warm delight faded by slow degrees into grey ashes. And it was by way of a veritable "abyss of misery" * that she was coming to sue for pardon. In the story of the Prodigal she saw herself.

We have watched the girl whom the King chose to honour rising from insignificance to a prominent place at Court. At first she was concerned only with her devotion to her lover; her surrender to magnificence and luxury was a gradual process. A surrender of this nature, however, be it never so reluctant, must ultimately become complete. Once she had begun to accept the good things that appertained to the position of royal favourite, no glamour of romance or royalty could screen the inherent sordidness of her position. In 1666 Bossuet had preached the Lent sermons before the Court and Louise de La Vallière had listened without heeding. The following autumn her daughter, known in girlhood as Mlle. de Blois, was born, and a little later the King bestowed on the young mother the estate of Vaujours and the title and rank of duchess. Before the world she appeared to have reached the highest pinnacle of favour and good fortune: to herself, however, these outward glories were the intimations of that downfall of which her heart had long been warning her. And at this point distress broke through that reticence which, long before, she had accepted as a defence against the chatter of the world. She selected Madame de Montausier, the mistress of the Queen's household, as the recipient of her

* *See* p. 94.

confidence, and to her she made it plain that she saw her elevation as a portent.

"It is customary among well-disposed persons when they are changing servants to warn them of their dismissal by the payment of their wages or by some other reward for past services." * Thus did the King's favourite receive the honours that it pleased him to confer upon her. These words of hers give so vivid a picture of her state that comment is superfluous. For three years she continued to struggle desperately against her doom. It was her chosen friend and companion, Madame de Montespan, who had supplanted her in the King's favour,† and it was the King's will that their companionship should continue. She had learnt to depend on luxury, and she had no life outside the artificial life of the Court (the care of her children having been entrusted to Madame Colbert, wife of the Minister of Finance) ;‡ therefore the prospect that unfolded itself before her offered no possibility of solace. She was the mistress of whom the King had wearied, no more, no less, but she had given her heart to him so freely that she could not take it back.

Early in the year of Madame's death Louise de La Vallière was seized with sudden illness. That threatening vision of eternity, which Bossuet had striven so often and so vainly to force upon the perception of his auditors, took definite form for her, and she realized, trembling, that she had not used the years that lay behind her as a preparation for that unknown future which seemed so close at hand. In the first stage of her conversion, as in the case of Armand de Rancé, the fear of Hell seems to have been the compelling factor, but with her this was only a transient condition ; three years of agonizing humiliation had prepared her for the message that grew clear when Death shadowed her, and she surrendered thankfully to a summons that proceeded from the Source of mercy.

* 24 mai, 1667. *See* Matter, A. : *Lettres et Pièces rares inédites*, p. 320. † Princess Palatine : *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 90.
‡ Mlle. de Montpensier : *Mémoires*, vol. iv, p. 62.

"Thus He strikes at the spot that is most sensitive. He pierces to the quick, till, forced by the irresistible power of His hand and by the dominion of His will, at last I yield my will to His, and in so doing I find health and life." * They are the words of Bossuet, but they might have been spoken by La Vallière. In her days of convalescence she wrote the "Meditation on the Mercies of God," which is so strange a record of her conversion, and, as we read, some of the seeds that Bossuet had scattered broadcast spring up before us. The problems which the necessities of her condition presented to this unhappy woman seemed insoluble. It is the natural instinct of the penitent to sweep away the hindrances and stumbling-blocks to altered conduct and to start on a fresh path, but La Vallière remained the titular favourite of the King, and as the King's will was law her own sense of conversion could not express itself in the disposition of her daily life.

Eventually the influence that Bossuet gained over her tyrant was the chief instrument in her emancipation, but in the spring of 1670 there was nothing to foreshadow their connection, and it is impossible to imagine a situation less propitious for the practice of the devout life than was hers. The death of Madame and the events that supervened were of assistance to her. At the beginning of September President Perigny, tutor to the Dauphin, died, and Bossuet, at that moment high in fame and favour, was appointed as his successor. This meant the introduction of a righteous influence at Court, but La Vallière had never had any pretensions either to wit or wisdom, and it was only the few who cared for learning and serious discussion who cultivated his society. At first she was indifferent to his coming.

In the spring of 1671, just a year after her illness and her conversion, her endurance failed her and she fled to the Visitation Convent at Chaillot.† Although she covered the same ground on both occasions the escapade of the maid-of-honour nine years earlier was a very

* *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 280.

† Madame de Sévigné: *Lettres*, vol. ii, Nos. 134, 136, 140.

different affair from the retirement of the duchess. Both were prompted by the impulse of an ill-balanced nature, but on the first occasion a passionate girl staked high with little risk of losing, on the second a weary woman made a despairing effort to escape from bondage. The King loved her no longer, yet he needed her because it was convenient that Madame de Montespan, the object of his new attachment, should live with her : fresh scandal was thus avoided. Her personal distaste for the curious office assigned to her was not regarded as worthy of consideration. The Duchess of Vaujours remained at Chaillot for twelve hours, and during that time three emissaries from the King appeared in the convent parlour. First, for the purpose of persuasion, Lauzun, then Bellefonds, and last, armed with the King's command, Colbert, in whose coach the unhappy woman returned to her former slavery. The world looked on and sneered. Madame de Sévigné was daintily amusing in a letter to her daughter over the histrionics of the former favourite, and the prudent arrangements of the King were continued undisturbed.

One of the messengers to Chaillot, however, was not content with the result of that day's business. Bernardin de Bellefonds, Marshal of France, held high office in the King's household, and therefore had known La Vallière since she came to Court. He was a man of forty, a gambler and a spendthrift, who had but recently distinguished himself by a wild feat of horsemanship for a wager far beyond his means.* But he was also the friend of Bossuet and of Fléchier and a frequenter of La Trappe.† His sister was Prioress of the Carmel in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and his personal follies did not prevent his comprehension of the privilege of the Carmelite. He was to be the link between Bossuet and La Vallière, but at the first stage of the renewal of her life the worldly experiences that he shared with her opened a way of communication that would have been closed against an ecclesiastic of Bossuet's reputation. And

* Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. ii, No. 116.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii, No. 146.

Bellefonds himself stood at the parting of the ways. Not long after his confidential friendship with La Vallière was established he was banished from the Court.* For him disgrace "struck at the spot that was most sensitive," and its effect was to crystallize the aspirations that had long been growing, into a living faith that dominated all his future conduct. He had pointed the young duchess to the hard way of entire sacrifice, but he doubted her strength of purpose, and he turned to Bossuet as being the wisest counsellor to whom he could confide her. Thus it came to pass that the Dauphin's tutor coupled the office of spiritual director to the King's discarded mistress with his duties in the royal schoolroom. The intimacy between Bossuet and La Vallière began in the late autumn of 1673. From the fact that she had been a frequent guest at the Carmel Convent for two years it may be assumed that he had knowledge of her spiritual awakening long before that date.

"No barrier is insurmountable to real determination. . . . We can do all things in pursuit of fortune ; we can do all things for the sake of pleasure. But if there is a question of offering our penitence in expiation of our offences, if links that are precious to us must needs be broken, capacity fails at once. We are unable ! " †

It was not unusual for a preacher to aim at an individual, and Bossuet had often done so. This passage, from a sermon preached at St. Germain before the Queen and Court, may well have been addressed directly to La Vallière, for it indicates the vacillation which Bellefonds resented, and suggests a remedy for the discouragement that was one of the most serious hindrances in her way. At the moment of Bellefonds' exile she had reached a point when she needed more skilful and experienced guidance than he could give her. While they talked together she might feel herself inflamed by a zeal equal to his own, and agree with him to cast aside the trammels of the world without delay, but when the poisonous realities of life closed in again upon her, and

* *See* Marquis de la Fare : *Mémoires*, p. 184.

† *Œuvres*, vol. x, p. 345.

she saw herself the chattel of the King, her courage failed. Bellefonds upbraided her instability ; she accepted his reproaches humbly, and continued to give occasion for them. It was left to Bossuet to examine and to deal with those barriers which loomed so portentously in front of her.

The task he had accepted was one demanding extreme delicacy of treatment. There were dangerous elements connected with it and no possibilities of advantage ; and when he undertook it he had had more than two years' experience of Court, a length of time that was quite sufficient to imbue him with the prevailing theory that favour with the King was the one good entirely desirable. The claim of La Vallière ran counter to his worldly interests ; moreover, the degree to which he was affected by the personality of Louis XIV is evident at many points in his career.* He was not only violently royalist on principle and by family tradition, but he bowed before the tremendous force of individual authority which the King had arrogated to himself. Also, once he had taken office his whole future hung on the King's approval. Nevertheless, when this clear call reached him the thought of his own advancement did not weigh against an opportunity of spiritual service. His first interview with Louise de La Vallière seems to have been at the end of November 1673. She wrote to Bellefonds : " I have seen M. de Condom and opened my heart to him. He marvels at the greatness of God's mercy towards me and urges me not to delay in obeying the Divine Will : he is of opinion that I shall be able to do this sooner than I imagine." †

A little later a letter from Bossuet shows that he had applied himself to mastering the case as a lawyer might have done, and had seen that the direct methods which commended themselves to Bellefonds were not likely to bring it to a successful issue. " A stronger character would by this time have advanced further," he wrote,

* *See* Arnauld, A.: *Lettres*, vol. vi, p. 162. *"Il n'a pas le courage de rien representer au Roi."*

† Brulart de Sillery : *Vie Pénitente de Madame de La Vallière.*

" but it is no use to force more upon her than she is able to bear."* He explained that Madame de Montespan was vehemently opposed to any change until the departure of the Court from Versailles, and that her victim had given in to her so long that a sudden experiment in defiance might bring about the collapse of the whole plan. " When one has to deal with an absolute monarch the way of obedience is the shortest road " says the contemporary biographer of the duchess,† and it was plain to Bossuet that she would never reach her goal by any other way. The knot that Bellefonds would have cut it was his business to untie, and he gathered together all his resources to aid him in his task. Before long, however, he became aware that the real barrier to the retirement of La Vallière was removed. The world knew that the King had another favourite : she was no longer required as a screen to Madame de Montespan. In the midst of reporting to Bellefonds on the situation he refers unexpectedly to Turenne. The Marshal had just arrived at Versailles " very pleased with the King and the King with him. Madame de La Vallière insisted that I should propound the question of her vocation to Madame de Montespan. I have said what required saying, and, as far as I was able to do so, I pointed out the responsibility of hindering her in her good desires. There is no strong objection to her retirement, but the Carmelite idea seems to cause alarm. In so far as was possible it has been covered with ridicule. I hope that the event will have a different effect. The King knows all about this conversation, and His Majesty having made no reference to it to me I have maintained silence also until now. I urge Madame la Duchesse to decide matters as quickly as possible. She finds it very difficult to speak to the King and puts it off from day to day. M. Colbert, to whom she has appealed about her money matters, will not hasten over their settlement until she herself shows more decision than she has done hitherto." ‡

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 88.
† Anon.: *La Vie de la Duchesse* (1708), p. 173.
‡ *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 88.

In writing to an intimate friend Bossuet set down his thoughts as they passed through his mind, and as he entered on an adventure which so intimately concerned the King, his courage was renewed by the reflection that Turenne was at Versailles and might, merely by the reminder of his presence, turn the scale if favour was hanging in the balance. No explanation of such a view was needed, for Bellefonds knew the Court and must have realized the peril of the shoals and quicksands with which La Vallière and her pilot were surrounded. She was fortunate in the friends that her distress raised up for her, but it is doubtful if either of them really understood her. Bellefonds was both impatient and obstinate, and it is likely that he had impressed his own conclusions upon Bossuet. To his mind the weakness of her character was proved by her acceptance of the dishonouring conditions that had been imposed upon her. On the day of her Profession, however, she acknowledged that for three years she had endured the sufferings of a soul in Hell, because as she had sinned before the world it was right that she should suffer before the world, and accept contempt and ridicule. She added that she desired deliberately to offer all this to God in expiation of her offences.* Probably a wise priest would never have sanctioned such a penance ; quite certainly a woman of weak and vacillating nature would never have fulfilled it. Fortitude of no common order was needed to maintain that difficult resolve in defiance of all opposition. Madame de Sévigné tells us what was said by wagging tongues. At the end of November La Vallière lamented, in a letter to Bellefonds, that the news of her retirement to a convent had been scattered broadcast. On December 15 Madame de Sévigné wrote to her daughter : " We hear no more from Madame de La Vallière of her retreat ; it gets no further than talk ; her lady's maid cast herself at her feet to implore her to remain—who could resist such persuasion as that ! " † To such a temperament as hers a covert sneer was more

* Princess Palatine : *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 120.

† Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. iii, Nos. 357, 380.

to be dreaded than abuse, and many sneers had been provoked by her conversion and its complicated sequel. Indeed, the malice of the Court pursued her for a time even after the convent doors had closed behind her.

Bossuet's support never wavered, and, as his personal knowledge of her grew, he referred to her with increasing reverence. "The world is constant in afflicting her and God is constant in mercy. I trust that He will prevail and the time will come when we shall see her far advanced in saintliness." * And a week or two later: "Her intention remains fixed and she seems to me to be pushing forward with her plans, in her own way, gently and quietly. And, if I am not very much mistaken, the power of God is upholding all she does and the purpose of her heart will carry all before it." † By that time the consummation of her purpose was drawing very near.

Beneath the magnificent apparel that the King required her to wear, there beat the heart of a Carmelite, yet even the more serious minds at Court were incredulous of her true purpose. Madame de Maintenon, many years afterwards, recounted a scene that was characteristic of them both.‡ She, who made it her business to give good advice, cautioned Madame de La Vallière against the risk of a sudden change from luxury to hardship. "You are now shining in cloth of gold and then you will be clad in homespun." The reply, given with complete simplicity, which revealed that this magnificent lady of the Court wore a hair-shirt and slept upon the floor, made a deep impression upon her companion. In fact, the austerities of Carmel had no terrors for Louise de La Vallière. It was the long series of explanations that her journey thither demanded of her before which she quailed. In the last months she followed Bossuet's counsels step by step. "What he tells me is my law," she wrote to Bellefonds.§ Yet she

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 89. † *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 90.

‡ Lavallée: *Madame de Maintenon—Éducation des Filles* (*Entretiens*, No. 35).

§ Brulart de Sillery: *op. cit.*, letter v, p. 105.

faltered before her last ordeal. The King knew of her intentions ; the assistance of Colbert in her business arrangements implied his acquiescence, but she had never spoken to him of her vocation, and the farewell interview, without which she could not leave the Court, held possibilities of agony from which her whole nature shrank.

Bossuet had been quick to grasp the finality of her resolve, and he did not press her to make this last surrender till she felt herself ready for it, but Bellefonds, less experienced and less trustful, suggested that after all she was finding her links with the world impossible to break.

" I must needs speak to the King ; that is my sole distress," she answered. " Ask God to give me the strength that I must have to do it. It is not a sacrifice to leave the Court for the cloister. But to speak of it to the King ! Ah ! that means torture ! " *

" The love of Madame de La Vallière for the King was an absorbing passion," wrote that keen observer the Princess Palatine ; " in all her life she had no love save for him only." †

The strength she needed was given her in time. Before the King left Versailles she had done that which it cost so much to do, and she was free. Bossuet had stood by her, loyally and patiently, through the poignant suffering that marked her last months in the world, and there is no episode in his life which does him greater honour. Nevertheless, his debt to Louise de La Vallière was heavier than hers to him, and he was ready to acknowledge it. On April 6, 1674, he wrote again to Bellefonds, a letter which it is well to read in full.

" I send you a letter from Madame la Duchesse de La Vallière, in which you will see that by the grace of God she is about to carry out the purpose which the Holy Spirit has put into her heart. The whole Court is amazed and edified by her calm and by her happiness, which increases as the time of accomplishment draws

* Brulart de Sillery : *op. cit.*, letter ix, p. 113.

† Princess Palatine : *Correspondance*, vol. i, p. 307.

near. In truth there is something so holy about her state of mind that I can never think of it without thanksgiving ; and the mark of the Hand of God upon her is the strength and the humility which is evident in all her thoughts : it is the Holy Ghost working in her. All her business affairs have been settled with extraordinary ease : penitence is now her sole concern ; and far from dreading the austerity of the life upon which she is embarking she is so intent upon the object of it that she is heedless of its trials. I am filled with delight and with confusion. I talk, and she acts. The words are mine, the doing hers. When I reflect on all this I have only one desire, and that is to go into hiding and be silent ; with every word that I speak I seem to condemn myself.

" I am very glad that my letters have been of use to you. God has used me for you in that way, and it all means more to you than it does to me, who am only the wretched channel through which the waters of Heaven pass ; only a drop here and there stays on its course. Pray for me constantly and ask God really to touch my heart." *

A fortnight later Bossuet left Versailles and took his part in the royal progress southward to Burgundy. The King, when it was his pleasure to participate in a military campaign, required that the Court should follow and remain within convenient distance. He wished to be able to return to his ordinary recreations whenever the military situation left him free, and Bossuet, as tutor to the Dauphin, was obliged to go wherever the Court went. When the great procession had started from Versailles Louise de La Vallière looked her last at the gardens and the palace, mounted for the last time into her coach, and was driven into Paris. In the monastic quarter of the Faubourg St. Jacques, near Val de Grâce, near Port Royal, near the Visitation, stood the convent known as the Great Carmel. Its doors had been open to her ever since Bellefonds had offered her his help three years earlier ; when she entered on that April

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 93.

afternoon they closed behind her for ever. Her clothing as a Carmelite novice took place at the beginning of June, and Bossuet did not return to Versailles till the end of that month ; but a year later, when the day of her Profession came (June 4, 1675), he was able to fulfil her wish and to preach the sermon.

The Queen and Court and all the fashionable world were there. "From time to time," says the Preface * to the *Meditations* of Louise de La Vallière, "it has pleased God to raise up prodigies of penitence to remind sinners that He is a God of mercy." But this sensational aspect of the story is its weakness rather than its strength. It is not as the centre of a most dramatic scene in the chapel of the Great Carmel that the figure of Louise de la Miséricorde is memorable ; it is as the religious, withdrawing further and further from the echo of the world until, in the last years of her life, the records of interviews or correspondence cease. Thus by slow advance she approached fulfilment of the Carmelite vocation.†

On the day of her Profession she had told the Princess Palatine that she deserved congratulation and not the pity that was being bestowed upon her, because her happiness was only just beginning ; ‡ and Bossuet, preaching for this great occasion with all the chatterers of the Court straining their ears that they might hoard his telling phrases, left them unsatisfied, and spoke to her.

This sermon § in the form that has come down to us is one of his triumphs. He expressed the thought, that was so often with him, that the preacher's power depended on his listeners, but the listeners behind the grille were in his mind : *Mes sœurs*, and not *Mesdames*. It was two days after Whitsunday, and his theme was the gradual transformation of the human soul of which the Holy Spirit had possession ; the note to which it is attuned is one of extreme austerity. The Court with its low standard, its easy bargaining between vice and

* Attributed to Bossuet—printed in early editions only.
† She died June 6, 1710, after thirty-six years in religion.
‡ Princess Palatine : *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 120.
§ *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 563.

religious practice, faded from before the eyes of the preacher ; instead he saw only the vision of the Carmelite who had been Louise de La Vallière, and the years of experience and growing wonder that lay before her. " Let your life be as much hidden from yourself as from the world ; escape from yourself and aim so high that there will be no rest for you save in the Presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

" You will be surprised to hear," wrote Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, echoing the verdict of the great world, " that M. de Condom did not achieve what was expected of him "*—and passes on in the same paragraph to other items.

But at the Great Carmel they were not dissatisfied.

* Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. iii, No. 404.

Chapter IX. *The Contest with the King*

THE relations of Bossuet and Louise de La Vallière had another aspect besides that of director and penitent. Even while she looked to him for guidance and accepted his authority, she was observing him with the keen discrimination which was the fruit of her bitter experience of men and manners. He was her senior by more than fifteen years and was equipped with many kinds of knowledge, but all her reverence for him did not blind her to the fact that, when he accepted place at Court and became tutor to the Dauphin, he entered on a path that for him was full of pitfalls. And it was the conditions of his absence from Paris on the occasion of her clothing which she lamented rather than the loss to herself. Her last letter to Bellefonds from Versailles contains this passage concerning Bossuet: "For his cleverness, his goodness, and his love of God he is admirable. I shall not fail to urge him to go on writing to you, but you on your part must persuade him to have as little as may be to do with certain dangerous people. You will understand what I mean. He is now absolutely pure in intention, but, indeed, he will need to be so if he is to steer straight. It is the thought of the journey that lies before him which makes me say this. At Tournai, as you know, one is obliged to be at very close quarters, and he cannot be too much on his guard."*

It was a proof of this woman's surrender of herself that she was not self-concentrated; she could look back at the world she was leaving and picture in its familiar scenes the man who had been her guide and support in some of her darkest hours; it is proof also of the balance of her mind that she could see the dangers that surrounded him. At no other period does he himself appear so conscious of them; as time passed, perhaps apprehension was stilled by custom, but it is evident that association with the experiences of Louise de La Vallière brought home to him the sharpness of contrast between vision and reality: "The words are mine, the doing hers."

* Brulart de Sillery: *op. cit.*, letter xi, p. 120.

In his letters to Bellefonds he harps continually on the same chord : the rot and hollowness of the world's prizes. And the thought of La Vallière haunted him. "How greatly God loves the simple heart that trusts in Him and loathes itself ! For real self-knowledge must go as far as loathing. It is not the truth or reality of things that we seek. When caprice has led us into a choice, or when we have drifted into a line of action, we find every sort of reason to justify ourselves. We say we are prudent when in fact we are only lazy. We label cowardice as self-restraint, and confuse pride and self-assertion with courage. We do not attempt to acquire any one of these virtues, but only to appear to have them in the eyes of others. . . . Indeed, I tremble to the very marrow of my bones when I consider the lack of depth in myself : I am frightened at the thought, yet when my mind is diverted from it if anyone were to suggest that I was wrong in anything I should defend myself with any number of arguments. My self-loathing vanishes at once. I am again full of self-esteem, or rather it becomes evident that I have never lost it for a moment. Ah ! when shall I make it my business really to be something and leave off striving after appearances either in my own eyes or in the eyes of others ? When will God be my sole desire ? Wretched man that I am to desire anything apart from Him ! When will the time come that I shall know no other rule except His will, and that I shall be able to say with St. Paul : 'We have not received the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God' ? The spirit of the world—spirit of vanity and of sham ; spirit of frivolity and of pleasure ; spirit of mockery and of dissipation ; spirit of self-interest and of ambition. Spirit of God—spirit of penitence and of humility ; spirit of charity and of trust ; spirit of simplicity and of gentleness ; spirit which hates the world and which is hated by the world, but which overcomes the world : may God be pleased to grant it to us ! " *

Thus Bossuet, Bishop of Condom and tutor to the

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 92.

Dauphin, in the midst of all the glories of Versailles, faced the hidden problem of his life. In the eyes of others he went upon his way surrounded by the respect that he had earned ; a dignified figure, always sedate, sometimes a little pompous, with nothing about him to suggest the possibility of an inner conflict, of a being torn betwixt aspirations that soared heavenward and ambitions social and intellectual that chained him fast to earth.

" Pray for me, I implore you ! And also, once and for all, never make these references to my innocence and do not be so generous in your regard for a most worthless sinner. I say this in all honesty because I want to avoid adding hypocrisy to my other offences." * Such words as these, written to a layman whose sole claim to the friendship of a man of Bossuet's standing was the reality of his conversion, are significant. No doubt the absolute domination of one human will over all life at Court engendered misgivings as to the possibility of real obedience to a higher law, but it was more than intellectual argument that was working upon Bossuet ; it was the force of example. In a sense, the thought of La Vallière rankled. Armand de Rancé also had made the same choice in the spirit that denies the possibility of an alternative. And during his ministry of preaching in Paris there had been another of these remarkable regenerations in the person of Le Camus, that clever and dissipated abbé who was stopped abruptly in his career at Court and, on becoming Bishop of Grenoble, had adopted the most austere practices of the Religious Life. " Some day it would be well to follow him on the path of penitence," wrote Bossuet.† And clearly Le Camus was quite as impressive in the eyes of his contemporaries as Rancé or La Vallière. He said of the Court that " it was a bog from which it was very difficult to extricate oneself," ‡ and he left it behind him for ever when he went to his distant diocese. For those whose feet were still stuck fast his free advance was a disconcerting spectacle. " God

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 90. † *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 119.
‡ Ingold : *Lettres du Cardinal Le Camus*, No. 34.

gives us a great example in M. de Grenoble ; if we cannot succeed in rivalling his giant strides we can at least follow his progress with our eyes" ;* so wrote La Vallière while the King and Madame de Montespan still held her at Versailles.

When he allowed his thoughts to dwell on either of these familiar figures, who had passed out of the sight of their fellows that they might not be hindered in their search for God, Bossuet became the prey of deep-seated spiritual discontent. But he had much to occupy his mind during his sojourn at Court, and ample justification for the belief that his vocation kept him in the world. It was as a priest at Court that he had served Louise de La Vallière ; it had been an office that involved danger, but it was one that brought its own reward, and all that was purest in his nature had been roused by the claim it made upon him. But when La Vallière had been safe for many months within her convent walls, his position brought upon him an ordeal of so extraordinary a nature that beside it all earlier experiences seemed flat and insignificant.

At Easter Madame de Montespan, with the astonishing effrontery that characterized her, proposed to receive the Blessed Sacrament, and made her confession to one of the priests at her parish church.† He was unversed in the rules of religious practice peculiar to the Court and he refused to give her Absolution. Breathless with indignation, she laid her complaint against him with the curé, M. Thibaut, only to find that the curé upheld the decision of his audacious colleague. The situation is one that the English mind cannot grasp without considerable effort, and in fact it belongs to a period as much as to a race. The desire for the practice of the Catholic faith, in spite of all revolt political or intellectual, is ingrain in the French nature even when such nature seems to be permeated with immorality ; but, at the Court of Louis XIV, where this practice in its external forms was difficult to separate from ceremony and

* Brulart de Sillery : *op. cit.*, letter vii, p. 111.

† *See* Floquet : *Bossuet, Précepteur du Dauphin*, p. 486.

etiquette, the misuse of spiritual privilege had become so common as to escape comment. The real subject for wonder is not that Madame de Montespan, in the midst of deliberate and mortal sin, should have asked for Absolution—but that she should have been refused it. And the marvel becomes far greater when we find the King himself hesitating to condemn the insignificant priests who had dared to withstand the will of Madame de Montespan.

It is easy to sum up the shams and the hypocrisy of the Court religion of those days in a few contemptuous phrases, but by so doing we deny recognition to one of the determining factors of actual life. The instinct which moved Louis XIV in that spring of 1675 to check the angry vituperation of his mistress, to apply his mind gravely and seriously to the point at issue between her and an unknown confessor, and finally to seek advice himself in connection with it, was as real an element in his complex nature as the self-will which swept away every obstacle to the indulgence of his passions. He chose two advisers, M. de Montausier and Bossuet, the governor and the tutor whom he had chosen for the training of his son. By his choice he proved himself to be completely in earnest, for Montausier had a reputation for austerity which it was essential to him to maintain, and Bossuet had proved very recently in his dealings with La Vallière that his position as a courtier was subservient to his vocation as a priest. It had not been pleasing to the King that the mother of his children, the maid-of-honour whom he had favoured, the young duchess whom he had created, should spurn her honours and hide herself beneath the veil and the coarse gown of a Carmelite. Bossuet knew that the responsibility for this was laid on him ; nevertheless, he added a second offence to the first without flinching. The King's interrogation gave him an opportunity, and he seized on it with the same power of concentration on the welfare of a soul that had made him the ideal companion for Henrietta of England in her last hours. He showed the King what his sin meant, and the impossibility of true

reconciliation with the Church while he persisted in it. It may be that the story of La Vallière had made its impression upon Louis; certainly, at this point, a wave of self-reproach swept over him and he determined, before he joined his armies and faced the danger of a new campaign, to put away his sin and reconstruct his life. He required Bossuet to give him direction in his endeavour, and to be the bearer of his command to Madame de Montespan to leave Versailles.

The separation lasted for more than three months, yet exceptional optimism was needed to maintain hope in its endurance. The optimism of Bossuet survived the test. He had an honest admiration for the King which blinded him to much that was visible to others, and he was quite ignorant of the wide range of expedients which are at the disposal of a really resourceful woman. He seems indeed to have been singularly guileless in his dealings with Madame de Montespan ; and above all he had immense faith in the power of grace. He has been accused of dissimulation in his connection with this celebrated episode in the life of Louis XIV, of maintaining an austere appearance while he countenanced intercourse, at any rate by letter, between the King and his mistress ; and of justifying laxity on the plea that a sudden severance of so strong a tie was too much to ask of human nature. His own words are the best refutation of the charge because they were written in such evident ignorance of the possibility that it could be brought against him. At this period it was to Bellefonds that he opened his heart most freely. Their common interest in La Vallière, their common experience in the life of the Court, their common persuasion of the overwhelming importance of the truths of religion in the midst of the challenging allurements of the world, drew them together very closely. That which Bossuet wrote to Bellefonds was that which he was trying to impress upon himself : it was self-study far more often than exhortation, and because of its obvious sincerity on other occasions it may fairly be accepted as evidence here.

On June 20, the King being still with the army and

Madame de Montespan in her country-house at Clagny, Bossuet wrote from St. Germain : * " How often I have longed for you among all the things that have been happening, and what an immense help it would have been to have had half an hour's talk with you. I have wanted to write to you a hundred times over, but besides the risk that is run by committing anything to letters it is always an imperfect method of expression. Pray for me, I do entreat you, and ask God either to relieve me of the heaviest charge that can be laid on any man or that He will extinguish all that there is of self in me that all I do may be His doing. I thank God that thus far I have not throughout this business considered my place in the world : but that is not enough ; it is needful to be like St. Ambrose, a real man of God, a man whose life is not here, from whom nothing proceeds that is not prompted by the Holy Spirit, whose whole conduct is of Heaven. God chooses the things which are not to bring to nought things that are ;—but it is needful to be nothing, that is to say, nothing in one's own eyes, emptied of self and full of God ";—and the letter closes with references to the newly professed Carmelite Louise de la Miséricorde and to Le Camus.

This close intercourse with the King was an astounding experience to Bossuet, yet he was more oppressed by the responsibility than uplifted by the honour of it. He felt himself insufficient for the task placed in his hands, and his sense of inadequacy expressed itself in aspiration towards a standard higher than that which he was touching. The letter to Bellefonds is that of a visionary, not of a hypocrite ; the worst accusation to which he is liable for his action in this crisis is that he was not sufficiently far-seeing or practical. In extenuation it can be urged that his office at Court demanded of him the repression of his natural inclinations. He had devoted his youth to the cultivation of the skill of the orator and he found himself debarred from its exercise. When he preached at the Profession of La Vallière he reminded his listeners that he was breaking a silence of years, and

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 119.

we find him, five months beforehand, corresponding with the prioress * on the theme of his discourse, a striking indication of the importance which he attached to this isolated opportunity for speech. The artist nature checked in its legitimate expression is prone to violent development if it is subjected to strain. Bossuet, philosopher, statesman, and scholar though he was, had the artist nature, and under "the heaviest charge that can be laid on any man" he became a dreamer. For dealing with Madame de Montespan the qualities of a detective would have been more useful, and she defeated him; in dealing with the King he allowed his judgment and his sense of probability to be misled by the intensity of his desire. Unquestionably Louis had been moved by an impulse of remorse, and the spasms of penitence that developed from it were not necessarily insincere because they were short-lived. It is due to the faith and ardour which Bossuet brought to the encouragement of a gleam of good intention, that the King made his dramatic pause in a progress of self-pleasing.

From the Easter when Madame de Montespan was rebuffed by the parish priests at Versailles until he joined his armies early in May, the King shut himself off from his ordinary companions. Bossuet saw him daily, and composed for him an Instruction "on the love of God as the principle of life." It contains frequent references to the exalted state of the reader for whom it is intended, and a Rule which would be suited only to a King; the instruction itself, however, might be used by any beginner at a very elementary stage of religious knowledge. Bossuet, referring to it long after, recalled the comment of the King: "I never heard of this before; no one has ever told me of it."† Many celebrated orators, including Bossuet himself, had, in fact, expounded these truths in the presence of the King, but the most skilful of teachers wastes his words on ears that will not hearken; it was the royal desire to be taught that gave Bossuet his opportunity. As he grasped it the courtier in him was routed

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 111.

† Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. i, p. 202.

by the priest, and he saw his sovereign only as a soul in need.

"There is no question here of long prayers, of reading which wearies those who are unaccustomed to it, or of any practices of this description. One can pray as one comes and goes, by turning to God in spirit. If the King will be in earnest over his ordinary prayers that will be quite enough. And nothing else need be altered except only the sin that distorts life, makes it false, disturbs it, and brings down upon it a visitation of God both in this world and the next." *

"Except only the sin!" To Bossuet it seemed so obvious that the realization of sin would lead in natural sequence to its rejection. Otherwise, why had that realization come to pass? While the King remained at St. Germain he was assisting him, and Madame de Montespan also, in their preparation for Communion at Whitsuntide. He visited the favourite—first in the house on the outskirts of Paris where she had taken refuge, and afterwards at Clagny—and was not very well received. She accused him roundly of supplanting her with the King from ambitious motives.† He accepted her reproaches with meekness that was worthy of Vincent de Paul, and when they ceased, and she became friendly, he attributed it to the work of grace. The change might seem miraculous, yet such a miracle was in accordance with the faith that he preached and that he believed. He never suspected that Colbert, more deeply versed in knowledge of their master, was already negotiating with Madame de Montespan for the resumption of her former position at Court. She had ascertained that Harlai, Archbishop of Paris, was ready to come to terms over the situation, and that Père La Chaise, the King's confessor, would give tacit assent. Thus the religious scruples of the King would cease to be a serious stumbling-block, and her experience suggested that his fervour was likely to be transient. Under these circumstances she could be gracious to Bossuet without effort.

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 115 *bis*.

† Floquet: *Bossuet Précepteur*, p. 491.

By the end of May her confidence in the future was assured. The King's money was once more at her command and she spent it royally ; there are letters from Louis to Colbert ordering that her desires should be carried out at any cost, and her desires were very costly. She required terraces and fountains and orange trees on her estate of Clagny,* and she had them. The date of a letter from the King to his Minister † on this matter is anterior to one from Bossuet to the King which assumes his perseverance on the path of renunciation.

" Whitsuntide draws near," wrote the director, " the season when Your Majesty is resolved to make your Communion. I am certain that the promise made before God will be observed, but as I was commanded to remind Your Majesty this is the time that I must do so. Remember, Sire, that there is no true conversion without the effort to banish not merely the sin itself, but the occasion of it. True conversion is not satisfied merely to crush that which the Scriptures call fruit unto death, which means sin ; but it goes right down to the root because fresh growth is inevitable if the root is left. This cannot be accomplished in a day, but the longer and the more laborious the task promises to be the greater is the call for energy. Your Majesty would not regard a rebel city as subjugated until the leader in rebellion was disgraced. In like manner God can never gain possession of your heart so long as it continues to be dominated by the passion which has separated you from Him. And, Sire, it is for your heart that God is asking. Your Majesty has seen the terms on which He asks for our complete surrender. I have shown them to Madame de Montespan and they have cost her many tears. And truly, Sire, there can be no better cause for weeping than the discovery that the heart which God was claiming was fixed upon one of His creatures. How hard it is to withdraw from this most fatal snare ! Nevertheless,

* Bought by the King in 1665. Eventual cost over 2,000,000 liv. *See* Colbert : *Lettres*, vol. v, p. 364.

† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, p. 327.

Sire, it must be done or there is no hope for your salvation. Jesus Christ, Whom you are about to receive, will give you the force to accomplish that which He has already taught you to desire.

"I do not ask you, Sire, to extinguish so vigorous a flame in a moment—that would be to demand the impossible : but, Sire, strive little by little to diminish it ; beware of giving it encouragement. . . . All the world is talking of the splendour of your troops and of all that they may accomplish under so great a leader ; and I, for my part, Sire, am musing in my inmost self on a much more important battle and a victory far harder of achievement which God requires of you. Reflect on these words of the Son of God, Sire ; they seem to have been written for great kings and for conquerors : 'For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?'—of what use will it be to you, Sire, to appear to be victorious and triumphant if inwardly you are defeated and enslaved ?" *

The note of apprehension is evident, yet, except for the one passage where vision becomes dim and resolution wavers, the letter is that of a director to a penitent rather than of a courtier to a King. Except for the one passage—but by reason of it, the whole letter bears the stain of failing faith. "I do not ask you, Sire, to extinguish so vigorous a flame in a moment !" Bossuet was receptive to impressions ; he had visited Madame de Montespan very recently, and it may be that, as he wrote, the scene grew vivid in his mind, and the royal favourite, majestic, arrogant, violent even in her tears of repentance, was once more before him—and his hand trembled. He had come to Versailles in middle life, and its glitter dazzled unaccustomed eyes ; even to men and women of high degree the magic of the Court was so potent that the vices of royalty appeared as a fine assertion of independence. It is well to remember that the Queen herself was on friendly terms with Madame de Montespan, and Bossuet, in maintaining his protest against

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 115.

notorious sin, had to withstand that strong pressure of general opinion which we now term atmosphere. If in those days there had lived a saint and he had been director to the King, denunciation might not have wavered before a mental picture of Madame de Montespan. But Bossuet was not a saint ; he was a man of simple aims in the midst of complicated conditions, groaning under a responsibility too great for merely human capacity. And though he failed to prove himself intrepid he did not play the coward.

Except his letter to Bellefonds we have no evidence regarding his state of mind during those summer weeks ; probably he hoped against hope and fought misgivings as though they were temptations. On July 10, in obedience to a command, he wrote again to the King * advising him regarding his duty to his people. The only allusion having any relation to Madame de Montespan is to a great conquest over self which has become an accomplished fact. It is hard to explain the royal desire for these directions. Less than a fortnight after they were written Bossuet learnt that Madame de Montespan was returning to Versailles to receive the King. The tidings can have caused no surprise to experienced courtiers who had watched the proceedings of the favourite. To them there had been sufficient presage in her return to her pleasure-house at Clagny from the dreary abode in the outskirts of Paris, where she had taken refuge when the King's concern regarding the security of his soul had caused so dire an upheaval of her comfortable and assured position. The King's advisers had come to the conclusion that she would return eventually whether they opposed her wishes or not, and prudently they facilitated what they could not prevent. Bossuet had been approached with care and circumspection. He was assured that the old relations were not to be resumed ; that Madame de Richelieu, mistress of the Queen's household, would always be present at any interview between the King and his former favourite, that Madame de Montespan held office at

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 121.

Court and that her banishment involved injustice, that for many reasons a moderate course was wisest. He replied that such an arrangement was inconceivable, that it invited temptation, that it was directly contrary to all the laws of the Church.*

With that the matter ended so far as he was concerned, and the sequel came upon him with a shock of astonishment. He must have known, when he heard that the favourite was returning to the palace, that his cause was lost, but for more than three months it had been the engrossing subject of his thoughts and prayers, and he did not relinquish it without a struggle. Ordering his coach in haste he set out to meet the King on his homeward progress. He found him at Luzarches, eight leagues distant from Versailles, but his skill in argument and in persuasion was allowed no scope. Louis received him coldly ; his mission was obvious and it was unacceptable : " Words are wasted, monsieur," he said, " I have given my orders, and they will be carried out."†

The episode, with its immeasurable significance to the mind of a priest, was over, and defeat could hardly have been more absolute. A few months later, when the palace at Versailles was complete and the royal owner was allotting its accommodation, he gave twenty rooms on the first floor to Madame de Montespan and sixteen on the second floor to his Queen.‡ Undoubtedly that curious interlude of penitence strengthened the dominion of the favourite and she had no more to fear from Bossuet. His failure served as a warning to others, and her reign continued without molestation from the Church. Princes, statesmen, and ecclesiastics bowed to her will, and her downfall might never have been accomplished but for the courage and resource of another woman.

Madame de Maintenon had mocked at Bossuet's attempt.§ She had the experience in which he was

* Antoine Arnauld : *Lettres*, vol. vii, p. 320.
† Floquet : *Bossuet Précepteur*, p. 511.
‡ Clément : *Madame de Montespan et Louis XIV*, p. 45.
§ Floquet : *Bossuet Précepteur*, p. 483.

lacking, for she was guardian and governess to the children of Madame de Montespan and the King. Her position offered special facilities for gaining intimate knowledge of the favourite, and she regarded spiritual weapons as useless in an attack upon her. Yet her scorn of Bossuet's credulity was not so great that she could not turn his failure to account. One lesson learnt from her observation of his experiment must have helped her materially in securing her ultimate supremacy. In her gradual ascent she never fell into the error of trusting either her sovereign himself or her rival in his regard ; yet for sixteen years after the attempt at which she scoffed she was never absolutely secure of her own victory. It was not until 1692 that Madame de Montespan asked permission of the King to retire from the Court. Her apartments at Versailles were given immediately to her son, M. du Maine,* beloved of Madame de Maintenon, and the protracted struggle between the mistress and the morganatic wife concluded.

These sordid episodes in the life of the King were momentous to the career of Bossuet, not only at the time of their occurrence, but in their bearing on his after reputation. The accusations levelled against him with regard to his intervention between the King and Madame de Montespan are especially damaging, because they appear to rest on contemporary evidence. Madame de Sévigné was provoked to mirth : " It is very funny that all that is most righteous is on the side of the plans and interest of Quanto (Madame de Montespan) and that M. de Condom gives her advice which is just the same as that given to her by her friends." † Madame de Sévigné did not write to make or mar reputations for all time, however. She set down the impressions of the passing moment in letters that were the substitute for speech with one she loved. She chronicled the gossip of the day without any endeavour to verify it, and laughed with real enjoyment over the absurdities of serious people.

* Clément : *op. cit.*, p. 151.

† Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. iii, No. 413.

Madame de Caylus,* another of the witnesses against Bossuet, is constantly inaccurate. She speaks sarcastically of the celebrated parting and the subsequent reconciliation—" which reflected so much credit on M. de Meaux, Madame de Montausier, and other virtuous persons at Court," † but she gleaned her knowledge from Madame de Maintenon, and that lady was absent at a health resort with M. du Maine when these events occurred. Moreover, Madame de Montausier had died two years earlier. The malevolent charge against Bossuet has no evidence of fact behind it and may be confuted by the testimony of his own conduct, and the position which he maintained in the esteem of persons of high integrity. Also it should be observed that if—as M. Chateaubriand and others have suggested—he obeyed expediency at the cost of principle he made an exceedingly bad bargain.‡ In other conflicts he showed unusual skill ; he could calculate probabilities and use his weapons to the best advantage, and he was never openly defeated. If he had intended to avail himself of his intimate relations with the King to secure a continuance of favour there is no reason that he should have been unsuccessful. Instead he gained nothing ; he continued his ungrateful task of forcing undesired knowledge on a dull-witted child, and had no security that, when his task was concluded, a reasonable provision would be made for his future. In fact, he never received any considerable token of favour ; his future offices in the household of Madame la Dauphine and Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne were natural results of his tutorship to the heir to the throne, and his bishopric at Meaux was meagre preferment. Possibly he suffered from his misuse of early opportunities. As a Court preacher he had been outspoken ; his championship of La Vallière was imprudent, and his interference with Madame de Montespan confirmed his reputation for independence.

* Cousin of Madame de Maintenon, brought up under her care. Born 1673, died 1729.

† Madame de Caylus : *Souvenirs*, p. 44.

‡ Chateaubriand : *Œuvres*, vol. v, p. 383 (ed. 1835).

" M. de Condom is clever enough," wrote Madame de Maintenon, " but he does not understand the spirit of the Court." This was a true verdict at the time when it was given. He was a courtier inasmuch as he gave the King a species of adoration which accords ill with his ordinary sobriety of thought, but in that he belonged to the times in which he lived. He was not heroic in conduct: he did not, when his master returned deliberately to sin, eschew his service. To have done so would have been to close the doors of public usefulness against himself for ever. He chose instead to maintain the even tenor of his way, seeking solace from the searching disappointment he had undergone in books and in the conversation of learned men. He had nearly reached the age of fifty at this time, and had been tutor to the Dauphin for five years. In the eyes of the world his appointment and his title of bishop secured for him considerable distinction, and, after the conflicting claims and anxieties of the preceding period, the chain of his employment suggested a measure of repose. To a man of Bossuet's calibre repose in the ordinary sense was impossible ; to him leisure meant merely the opportunity to choose the object of his labour, and it can hardly be said that his conscience allowed him even such leisure as this in the intervals of his attendance upon the Dauphin. In fact he gave his spare time to the study of subjects which he had not regarded as necessary to a preacher and controversialist, but which were part of the equipment of the ideal instructor of a great prince.

It may be said of Bossuet that he revived the medieval office of taster to the Dauphin, though in his case its functions were limited to food for the intellect, and in that direction the prince's appetite was quickly satisfied. And, undeniably, there is an element of the grotesque in the application of his magnificent capacities to schoolroom drudgery. Nevertheless, his ten years of tutorship were rich in intellectual profit to himself, and his place in the royal household secured for him a recognition in learned circles, which might never have been accorded if the achievements of his brain had had no interest to

support them. In May 1671 he was elected to the French Academy, and the honour was one to which he was by no means indifferent. Only on rare occasions did he express anxiety regarding the adequacy of his work, yet the Address * that he was to deliver when he took his seat was enclosed to Conrart † for criticism and correction, with a letter that suggests the diffidence of the literary novice. His theme was "Style and the French Language," and Conrart, besides holding the office of perpetual secretary to the French Academy,‡ was a survivor of the distinguished inner circle of the Hôtel Rambouillet; therefore his approval could be accepted as a certificate of excellence on such a subject, and if any advice were needed none could be more valuable. But Bossuet had already won his spurs as orator and master of language with the *Oraison Funèbre* for Madame, and only extreme respect for the august body of which he was to form a part could have prompted his evident misgivings regarding his Address.

A position at Court had many uses, and he contrived to turn it to account in an enterprise which had more direct connection with the Church than any of the labours of the French Academy. From his schoolboy days at Dijon Bossuet had been an eager student of the Bible, and, as soon as he became a recognized influence, he urged all priests to be ceaseless in their study of it and to have the New Testament always within reach.§ During his sojourn in Paris the question of Scripture study had been brought into prominence by the publication of the translation of the Bible known as the Mons Edition, for which Arnauld and his colleagues were largely responsible,‖ and later by the *Critical Study of the Old Testament*, by Richard Simon.

When he was liberated from his schoolroom duties the Dauphin's tutor sought the society of kindred spirits

* *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 700.
† *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 50.
‡ Pelisson: *Hist. de l'Académie Française*, p. 18 (ed. 1700).
§ Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 46.
‖ Noailles: *Hist. de Madame de Maintenon*, vol. i, p. 260.

with whom he might discuss the topics that were near his heart. There was an avenue in the park at Versailles which became known as the Allée des Philosophes because Bossuet was in the habit of walking there with a group of learned friends. It was possible in such company to get very far from the Court and its perilous excitements, even while remaining within ear-shot of its festivities,* and the subjects on which this little company conversed were not treated superficially. The Port Royal translation and the experiment of Richard Simon spurred them to an enterprise which, under the name of "The Little Council," became celebrated. At the invitation of Bossuet, and in his rooms, there were constant meetings for study and comment on the Bible. The first was held in December 1673, and they continued for nearly eight years.† Bossuet was president, the Abbé Fleury secretary, and among the associates were famous scholars such as Mabillon, Huet, Renaudot, Pelisson, and the young Abbé de Fénelon. A few laymen, of whom Bellefonds was one, were admitted, but the enthusiasm with which the scheme was sustained suggests that membership must have been limited to eager students. The ardour of Bossuet was sufficient to vitalize every discussion, and the undertaking of a complete Commentary on the Scriptures came within the limit of his aspirations. It should be understood, however, that anything approaching such investigation as falls under the category of Biblical Criticism was very far from his design. He believed that it was the privilege of students to disclose to others the treasure contained in Holy Writ, and the practical application of his belief may be found in his *Meditations on the Gospels*, written during his episcopate at Meaux.

These conferences served another purpose besides that of study; they were an encouragement to friendliness among men whose ordinary avocation did not dispose them to sociability. To Bossuet himself they were

* Bossuet considered that they gave too much prominence to "*l'élégance naturelle de leur esprit.*" (*Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 103.)

† *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 102, *note*.

of immeasurable value. His letters to Bellefonds show that, at times, the peculiar type of solitude implied by his place at Court oppressed him, and the burden of it, in his hour of disappointment, would have been hard to bear without the possibility of escape to that world of study and reflection which the Little Council represented. That was his kingdom, and when he had sustained defeat at the hands of Madame de Montespan he composedly retired to it. He had been dazzled by the thought that God was calling him to guide his royal master. In his eyes such a responsibility was the highest that a man might hold, and his letters show the degree to which the vision of it had absorbed him. The prospect vanished, with uncompromising abruptness, and he appeared to go upon his way unmoved. If in his calm acceptance of defeat he may have seemed to fail in heroism, at least the manner of it did not lack dignity.

The last years of Bossuet's life at Court, when the full sunshine of royal favour had been withdrawn from him, must be regarded in relation to the Little Council, and to the progress of his development as man of letters. So judged, their fruitfulness is evident.

Chapter X. *The Dauphin*

THE position of Bossuet at the Court of Louis XIV is the subject of much dispute and criticism. It would be interesting if we could discover what would have been the choice of St. François de Sales under similar circumstances. In his later years the Bishop of Geneva had no liking for the ways of life in Paris, and won for himself uncomfortable experience of the standards and the practices prevailing in the great world ; nevertheless, he recognized the call to an endeavour to leaven society rather than to hold aloof from it. The world with which Bossuet became familiar half a century later had not raised its standard. Because the greatness of the King was so incessantly proclaimed by those about him, the public mind became unbalanced and lost discrimination. No man could hold a post in the royal household if he refused to accept the courtier's creed ; yet for priest or layman to avoid the Court was to renounce those opportunities of widespread influence which good men may legitimately covet. Bossuet as temporary preacher to the Court had been bold in denouncing wickedness in high places ; as tutor to the Dauphin his loyalty forbade all criticism ; if his eyes still beheld the stains on his master's shield his mind refused to dwell on them. The personal fascination of the King helped him to quench misgivings ; in the royal presence he could always forget the experience of La Vallière, and when he strove against Madame de Montespan it was she who represented sin ; apart from her the King remained worthy of respect and admiration. And once he became imbued with this leading sentiment of the courtier (and his intercourse with Henrietta of England had helped him to its acquisition) there could be no question of his readiness to accept the post of tutor to the Dauphin.

At the present time the suggestion of applying great powers, such as Bossuet possessed, to the tuition of a child would be inadmissible, but the majesty which surrounded the cradle of the Dauphin in the eyes of the world made any office connected with him a mark of high distinction.

" It is hardly possible that in the whole course of history a prince has been born to equal eminence " ; so wrote Madame de Motteville in her faithful chronicle of the sayings and doings of the Court.* In 1670, when the tutorship was vacant, there were one hundred applicants for the post. Bossuet was not among the competitors, but when the office was bestowed upon him he regarded it as a great and welcome honour. In September 1670 at the royal palace of St. Germain-en-Laye he pledged himself by solemn oath before the King in person : " To devote myself and all my powers to the training of the King's son in the love and fear of God and in the principles of good conduct, and to cultivate his mind by knowledge of the literature and science worthy of a very great prince."† The very great prince was then nine years old and Bossuet, at forty-three, was well-equipped for a career as scholar or ecclesiastic and altogether ignorant of childish interests and pursuits. Yet four years earlier his name had been considered for this office. The King's choice fell instead on Périgny, a man of humble origin (he was the grandson of a tailor known in Paris as Peau de Loup ‡) who had raised himself by solid capacity and dexterous solicitation to the position of reader to the King and also to membership of the *Parlement* of Paris. Fortune had favoured him. The King needed a diligent and trustworthy scribe to aid him in the compilation of the Memoir to which he applied himself during the Dauphin's infancy. While he was reader to the King Périgny appears to have taught the little prince to read, and to have given him lessons before he reached the age when a regular tutor was considered desirable.§ He was nominated publicly as official tutor September 1666.

A year later the period was reached when the child was to be removed from the care of women (he was then six), and Montausier received the appointment, of all

* Madame de Motteville : *Mémoires*, vol. v, p. 248.
† Floquet : *Bossuet Précepteur*, p. 29.
‡ Gui Patin : *Lettres*, vol. iii, p. 296, December 10, 1660.
§ Dreyss : *Mémoires de Louis XIV*, vol. i, p. lx.

others at Court most to be coveted, of governor to the Dauphin. At that time the organizing of the new household did not appear to concern Bossuet, yet, as it was destined to be the background of his life for ten important years, each detail of its formation was, in fact, momentous to him. And it may be said, in considering the appointments of the Dauphin's household, that the evil humours prevalent at Court were as inimical to the unhappy child who was its centre as to his mother. Madame de Montausier, who had reigned over the Hôtel Rambouillet in her youth, learnt after marriage to use the gifts that made her the queen of cultivated society for a less charming purpose. She became the most skilful of courtiers, and the high moral code which had been so strong a part of the influence of the celebrated salon was altogether forgotten. She was appointed gouvernante to the royal children before the birth of the Dauphin. Thirty years earlier, at the risk of her beauty and of her own young life, she had shut herself up with her brother, a child of eight, who was dying of the plague, and tried to save his life,* but that celebrated act of devotion belonged to the youth she had left behind, and the earliest years of the little prince were not guarded with motherly solicitude. We hear of a fall from his cradle at Versailles, and of his head nurse, Lacoste, beating him violently in the royal palace at Fontainebleau.† The palace intrigue that summoned Madame de Montausier from the royal nursery to supplant Madame de Navailles ‡ as head of the Queen's household, was a merciful dispensation for him, and for a brief period he had experience of tenderness under the care of Madame de la Motte,§ whose grandmother had been gouvernante to Louis XIV. She is reported to have been over indulgent with him, and before he attained the age of seven Montausier became his governor. For that ill-omened appointment his father's sins are

* Petit, N.: *La Vie de M. le Duc de Montausier*, p. 41.
† Dubois de Lestourmières: *Journal* (1663), p. 410.
‡ Madame de Motteville: *Mémoires*, vol. v, p. 321.
§ *See* Druon: *L'Education des Princes*, vol. i, p. 223.

directly responsible. Madame de Navailles was disgraced because, as guardian and duenna in the Queen's household, she had refused to recognize the claim of her royal master to absolute monarchy. She would not confound loyalty and licence. Madame de Montausier was prepared to be more complacent ; indeed, her consideration for others was so great that she gave hospitality to Madame de Montespan in her own apartments and braved the violence of her guest's ill-mannered husband.* As reward for her devotion Montausier was given the highest mark of the King's esteem and confidence.

The portrait of Montausier † shows a strong face, intellectual and also cruel. He was very well known for his brusque manners and discourteous speech. Bred under the most austere Huguenot conditions, he became a hardy and a valiant soldier, and contrived to acquire sufficient literary knowledge to maintain a place in the cultured circle of the Hôtel Rambouillet during the fourteen years that he was courting Julie d'Angennes. In his maturity he owed his share of happiness and of success to the cultivation of his mind, but in boyhood he was so averse to any form of mental application that his own education had been literally beaten into him.‡ " He was far more calculated to crush a child who was, like Monseigneur, naturally of a lazy and a gentle disposition and somewhat obstinate—than to inspire him to become what he ought to have been." Such was the testimony of Madame de Caylus.§ But the Dauphin had no one to protect him, and it was the King's will to deliver him over to Montausier. The governor was to have complete authority over the work and play of his pupil, and might reprove, scold, and punish him. All other offices in the household were subordinate to his, and no arrangement was to be made except under his orders and after consultation with him. Montausier is the Misanthrope of Molière's play. When he embraced

* Mlle. de Montpensier : *Mémoires*, vol. iv, p. 154; and Spanheim : *Relation de la Cour de France*, p. 111.

† In Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

‡ Petit, N.: *op. cit.*, p. 14.

§ Madame de Caylus : *Souvenirs*, p. 73.

the Catholic faith he abjured none of the sternness which was regarded as characteristic of the Huguenots.* Périgny trembled before him, and is said to have been so eager to fulfil his exacting demands that he died of fright and overwork.†

Bossuet was the King's choice as Périgny had been. There were certain drawbacks from the governor's point of view in the appointment of a bishop, even though he was not of noble birth ; moreover, the hapless President de Périgny by his lack of learning had exalted the intellectual status of Montausier. To set against this, however, there was the fact that Périgny had declined to accept a partner in his service to the Dauphin, being well aware that his reputation as a scholar would not gain by the comparison involved, whereas Bossuet welcomed one who was selected by Montausier—Pierre Daniel Huet,‡ afterwards Bishop of Soissons, and one of the most noted classical scholars of his day. The governor had indeed every reason to be satisfied with the provision for the improvement of the prince's mind, and in Bossuet and Huet he had men of goodwill of whose reasonable loyalty he was secure. The cultivation of the prince's character and manners he seems to have regarded as his own concern, and so far did his Huguenot conscience carry him that the child was, almost literally, never out of his sight. "He slept in his room, was present at his levée and his prayers, followed him to Mass, sometimes shared his studies, and never left him in playtime because he believed that it was at such times that children showed their real selves." §

There is no reason to believe that Bossuet was distressed by the conditions that he found when he entered the Dauphin's household. Tradition says that he was himself a solemn, studious child with a great sense of responsibility, and it would have been natural for him

* Petit, N.: *op. cit.*, p. 88.

† MS. Bib. Nat., ff. 4333 ; quoted *Revue Bossuet*, December 1905.

‡ Born at Caen, 1630. "*De tous les hommes qui ont existé jusqu'ici, c'est Huet qui a peut-être le plus lu*" (Sainte-Beuve : *Causeries*, 3 juin, 1850).

§ Petit, N.: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 14.

to assume in the King's son far higher qualities than had distinguished his own youth. But the Dauphin, at nine years old, did not regard his vocation of rulership with the seriousness that was expected of him. Even in the nursery he had been confronted by a magnificent theory of the King's majesty, for adulation of Louis XIV was a recognized weakness in Madame de la Motte. A strong nature would not have been hindered in its development by that overshadowing erection, but the Dauphin was the child of the sensitive misdirected woman who had the ill-fortune to be Queen of France, and he had inherited her disposition. A firm hand, with love to guide it, might have led him on to worthy manhood. It had pleased Madame de Montespan, however, to entrust him to Montausier.

The governor, when he accepted office, declared that he was no longer his own man and had no more personal choice.* The tutor was no less devoted in intention, and for him the sacrifice involved may have been more severe. Thenceforward the exercise of the gift, to which he had devoted years of training, was subordinated to his duty to the child on whom the future fate of France depended. No doubt the imaginative faculty which is a part of the orator's equipment aided him in his self-dedication. He had in view, clearly, the outline sketch of a perfect pupil, whose inherent quality and gradual growth should furnish a model to the youth of the kingdom, and for a time he was able to retain this vision. He was installed in the royal schoolroom in the autumn of 1670 ; in June 1671, at his reception to the French Academy,† he was able in all good faith to make the following reference to his charge : " One who is now growing up, gentlemen," he said, " will be your great supporter. If our hopes are fulfilled and our endeavours are successful the day will come when the prince will be more than a mere name mentioned in your deliberations ; he will be able to admire their vigour, to enjoy sharing in them, and to pay his tribute to their result." And in September 1672, after two years' experience, he shows his mind

* Petit, N.: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 11. † *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 700.

with those revealing touches that are especially characteristic of his letters to Bellefonds.* "I must tell you something of Monseigneur the Dauphin," he wrote; "It seems to me that I see in him the beginnings of great things: simplicity, sincerity, kindliness, a perception of the Sacred Mysteries in spite of all his carelessness, a something that recalls him to God in the midst of any distractions. If I repeated to you the questions he asks me and the real desire for the service of God which shows itself in him you would be altogether delighted. But the world, the world, the world, its pleasures, its evil communications, its bad examples! Deliver us, O Lord, deliver us! In Thy grace and loving kindness is my hope! Thou didst deliver the children from the fiery furnace, but for them one of Thine angels was sent. And I, alas! what do I lack? Humility, self-abasement, holy confidence, perseverance, untiring labour, patience—and then complete surrender to God, striving to live as the Gospels teach with this word perpetually in mind: 'But one thing is needful——'"

Thus far he is concerned only with the Dauphin, but before the letter closes there is a sidelight on himself, humorous in intention and innocent of any suggestion of self-pity. "I should never come to an end if I did not force myself to do so. I do not talk here, and so it comes to pass that I write, and that I write, and that I write. There! For a great preacher, is not that a fine specimen of style? Laugh at me if you will for keeping a youthfulness which still seeks after amusement. And pray for my child and for me!"

In his thoughts he was tender enough towards "his child"; unfortunately in his vision of him he permitted himself to forget the reality of daily experience. A vivid picture of the Dauphin's household is provided for us in a fragment of the *Journal* of Dubois de Lestourmières, groom of the bedchamber. Earlier pages give an account of the death of Louis XIII, of incidents in the boyhood of Louis XIV, and of happy childish experiences of the Dauphin himself before he was overshadowed by

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 64.

the grim presence of Montausier. Another witness tells us how charmingly and childishly he danced before the Court at the age of five.* In July 1671 Dubois, who was over seventy, entered on his term of service at St. Germain. That month was made memorable by the death of the King's younger son, Anjou, after a long illness. His parents, knowing his danger, were on their return journey to Versailles, and it was the duty of Bossuet to meet them at Luzarches with the melancholy tidings.† This was on July 11, 1671, and it was the first occasion probably when he was closely associated with his royal master. It is quite clear that he was susceptible to the personal fascination of the King. This weakness was one of his bonds of sympathy with Bellefonds, to whom, condoling on his exile, he wrote : " It is not the Court for which you care, but only for the King himself." ‡ It aided him also to understand the struggles and the sufferings of La Vallière, and brought him closer to the thought and spirit of his age, but it did not assist him to an unbiassed view of the Dauphin and the conditions of his training. He came from the royal presence at Luzarches with a new incentive to fulfil the King's will in all things, and it chanced that evil days for his pupil were imminent.

Dubois' *Journal* gives us their history : " August 4, Tuesday, 1671, at Fontainebleau. M. de Montausier struck the dear child four or five times with a cane, so sharply that he was almost crippled. The afternoon was worse. No pleasures, no going out. In the evening, when he was saying his prayers and there were many people present, he missed a word in the Lord's Prayer. M. de Montausier threw himself upon him, striking him with his fist till I thought he would kill him. M. de Joyeuse said, merely : ' Eh ! M. de Montausier ! ' After this he had to begin again, and the dear child repeated just the same mistake. M. de Montausier seized his two hands in one of his own and dragged him away

* Olivier d'Ormesson : *Journal*, p. 204.
† Dubois de Lestourmières : *Journal* (1673).
‡ *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 58.

to the room where he does his lessons ; there he caned him five times on each hand with all his force. The dear child's screams were terrible to hear."

Probably the little prince had been extremely naughty —the fond old servant omits all mention of his misdoing —and Montausier's violent temper may have been irritated till it became ungovernable. The culprit was only ten years old, however, and Dubois asserts that the scars and bruises he received were visible a month later. Montausier had received his absolute authority from the King, and Bossuet was only one among many who were witnesses, but to the consent implied by silence he added active effort to persuade the child not to complain to the Queen. The Dauphin was good-natured, also he may have feared the immediate result of laying information against his tyrant, and Montausier's apprehensions were laid to rest. There is no record of another scene of this kind, nor is there, on the other hand, a suggestion of any effort to soften the fear and hatred implanted in the mind of the little prince. When the royal schoolroom was once more at Versailles, we hear of the governor taking leave to spend a few days in Paris and the pupil allowing his delight to show itself. If Dubois is correct Bossuet himself immediately recalled Montausier, and the Dauphin received three strokes of the cane to moderate his joy. Incontestably Montausier abused his power, and turned the wilfulness of childhood into rebellion, sullenly conceived under the constant correction of the cane, and stubbornly carried out when manhood brought liberty of action.

It is hard to judge whether Bossuet might have intervened and failed to do so. Dubois and another member of the household approached him with the hope of inducing him to make a protest against the violent treatment from which the child was suffering, but they could get no satisfaction from him. Deference to authority was a principle that he did not set aside lightly, and his own office implied acceptance of the governor's authority. Even if he had been as much distressed as the old valet by his pupil's plight it does not follow that he could have

altered it, but, in fact, there is no vestige of evidence that it did distress him. He was not in any degree responsible for the abuse of authority which he was forced to witness, and such blame as may attach to him for the lamentable methods adopted in the training of the Dauphin is due solely to his indifference. In the next generation Fénelon, occupying a similar position towards the Dauphin's sons, was on terms of affectionate intimacy with Beauvilliers, their governor, and the children flourished in the kindly atmosphere of family life.* But Bossuet was kept at a distance by Montausier and required to confine himself strictly to his own department. For the tutor, as well as for his pupil, those years in the schoolroom were years of discipline. In the after-period of his episcopate at Meaux he was noted for the patience and the ease with which he adapted himself to the humblest intellects, and probably he would have acknowledged that the Dauphin helped him to acquire this capacity. He learnt in other directions also. At Metz he had been immersed in the study of the Fathers, but it was profane rather than sacred literature with which the King's son was to be made familiar, and therefore he plunged into the classics and found a new joy in life. It has been said that for him the call to teach meant before all else the call to learn, and without doubt his style as a writer acquired a strength and grace of which it gave no promise before his years of tutorship.

The office of a schoolmaster cannot lightly be undertaken by one who has attained to middle life, and the standard towards which Bossuet aspired was a high one. It seemed to him that a beginner approaching Latin grammar should learn the rules in his own tongue, but all the primers of that day were written in Latin. A difficulty of this nature did not daunt him in the slightest ; if such a book as he required did not happen to exist he lost no time in composing one himself. When the subject was the history of the world he resorted to the same expedient. The child whom he was teaching was to have a part in the history of the future, therefore the

* Druon: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 266.

history of the past was essential to the storing of his mind. To Bossuet's vision of the knowledge necessary to a King's son we owe his *Histoire Universelle*, and, it may be, the first revelation to the literary mind of France of the philosophy of history.

These undertakings witnessed to a sense of high responsibility in his task which may appear over-weighted; but, in fact, he was only sharing the general idea of its importance. It is significant that the Pope intimated his wish for an account of Bossuet's method of education. In replying, Bossuet gave a picture which represents the scheme that existed in his mind rather than the actual experiences of the royal schoolroom. The subject of his letter to the Pope is a studious boy hungry for knowledge, and bearing but small resemblance to the sluggard Dauphin. Such passages as these, for instance, verbally accurate and written in all good faith, convey a false impression:

"We did not think it desirable to give him the work of great authors piecemeal; one book of the Aeneid, one book of Caesar by itself. We have read each work right through, at one draught as it were, so that he should by degrees accustom himself to see the purpose of the whole and the connection of all the parts. . . . Among the poets those which give most pleasure to Monseigneur le Dauphin are Virgil and Terence, among historians Sallust and Caesar. He regards the latter as an admirable guide towards greatness. . . . I can hardly estimate the amount of amusement and instruction he has found in Terence or the variety of the living pictures of human nature that have grown vivid to his mind as he read. . . . All the notes we have made on each author would fill a thick volume.

"At the same time we take geography as if it were a game, pretending to travel, sometimes by way of the great rivers, sometimes skirting along the coasts, stopping in the towns and the great ports, and looking closely at everything.

"And then we teach him history. And because this is the guide for individual and national life, we have ap-

proached this subject with particular care : but we have been most concerned that he should know the history of France, which is his own history. We have not required him to study books, except some of the finest passages of Philippe de Comines and Bellay ; we have gone to the original sources ourselves, and taken from recognized authorities whatever was most likely to be of service to him. We have taught him verbally and made him repeat the lesson from memory : he writes it out in French and then translates it into Latin ; thus it is useful as an exercise, and his French as well as his Latin is corrected. On Saturdays he goes straight through all he has done in the week, and, as the amount increases, we divide it into books which he is required to reread frequently. He has been so diligent over this study that he has come down to recent times, and we have almost the whole of our national history written by the prince with his own hand in Latin and in French." *

Knowledge of the boy who was heir to the throne of France was the Pope's desire, and it must be admitted that, when he had read the summary of education just quoted, his desire remained unfulfilled. The letter sheds no light upon the pupil ; its interest concerns the tutor only. Many years before Bossuet had pictured the progress of the ascending soul " Carrying out all undertakings because it loves to follow the will of God : doing all things with energy because it is the will of God that nothing should be done listlessly." Bossuet the tutor kept that ideal before him, and was prone to lose consciousness of actuality in his vision of his office, in outline and detail, as held directly under God Himself. With such an incentive to diligence it was possible for him to forget poverty of material or feebleness of result, but the Dauphin himself might have been happier had his tutor's views been less transcendent. It was supposed to be a pleasant and easy method of impressing his day's work upon his memory to arrange a species of competition between himself and his two pages † during the

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 192.

† Vallon de Mimeurs and Desiré de la Chesnaye.

process of undressing. They were to question each other in the presence of their tutor on the subjects they had studied; and in order of merit, according to the intelligence and accuracy they displayed, their names were set down each evening in a book kept for the purpose.* This exercise, and the entry regarding it, was continued every night for ten years with very occasional interruptions, for there were no holidays in the royal schoolroom, and Sundays brought only slight variation of the daily round. And Bossuet, in all good faith, regarded this as a diversion likely to be welcome to his pupils, without a suspicion of the mental exhaustion and the dull resentment that might be induced in unwilling players by such a pastime.

There were times, however, when the scales fell from his eyes and the naked truth claimed recognition from him. A manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale † preserves a lesson in dictation suggestive of a strained relationship between tutor and pupil. It was composed by Bossuet, written out in French, and afterwards translated into Latin by the Dauphin. The impression that it leaves with us differs materially from that produced by the letter to the Pope. Indeed, the hard fact of that schoolroom tragedy projects itself through the well-worded phrases of the lesson, and the chief actors in it return to being as we read—the prince, sullen and mutinous ; the tutor, vibrant with that enthusiasm for learning which is incredulous of intellectual apathy; and, towering in the background, the grim figure of the governor, with his pitiless strength and ever-ready cane.

" Do not think, Monseigneur, that it is only because of your mistakes in grammar that we correct you so severely at your lessons. No doubt a prince, who ought to be accurate in all things, should be ashamed to make such mistakes, but our indignation has higher grounds. For it is not so much the mistake that we blame as the lack of attention that is the cause of it. If you put words in their wrong places now you will misdirect affairs in time to come ; you will reward when you should

* Druon: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 247. † *Œuvres*, vol. xxvi, p. 14.

punish, and punish when you should reward ; everything, in short, that you do will be disordered if you do not in childhood train your mind to be attentive and to give serious thought to whatever you have in hand." Bossuet then proceeds to show the peculiar danger to the character of a prince incurred by yielding to the sin of indolence ; the fatal ease with which, in his circumstances, honour and luxury and amusement were obtained left no inducement to industry or effort. " But you must not imagine that wisdom also is yours by nature. We cannot infuse your mind with the principles of good behaviour while you yourself are thinking of something else." The ruler of a kingdom may be forced to deal with conflicts within and without the realm ; plots and intrigues in the army, in the government, in the palace itself—" You cannot control a horse of any mettle if you leave the rein loose and let your attention wander, much less a vast multitude swayed by differing interests and by changing fashions. . . . Wake up, Monseigneur ! and regard the great monarch to whom you owe your birth. In peace or war he directs everything himself ; he replies to the envoys from foreign countries, he instructs his own ambassadors, he governs his armies, controlling some in person and directing where others are to go—and all this weight of affairs does not divert his attention from details. Train yourself also to be capable of greatness. A life that ought to be so full of activity must not open with laziness and inattention. Such a bad beginning may dull the clearness of your brain ; you were born with good capacity—do not risk the loss of a gift from God. Assuredly all the powers that you received from Nature will be extinguished. If you refused ever to dance again you would lose the capacity and forget how it was done ; in like manner if you will not use your brain it will become torpid and sink away into a miserable lethargy."

Bossuet intended, it is clear, to paint the results of indolence as luridly as possible, but he had no suspicion that he was depicting the future that actually awaited the Dauphin. Each succeeding month found the luckless

prince more deeply plunged in the morass of undesired knowledge and more firmly resolved that no traces of his immersion should adhere to him in after-life. Two stories that survive are significant of his state of mind.* In the early stage of his education he overheard a lady bewailing her misfortunes. He interrupted her : " Are you ever obliged to write exercises, madame ? " " No ! Monseigneur." " In that case you really do not know what it is to be unhappy." And later, when the negotiations for his marriage were complete and he was informed of the new prospects that were opening out before him, his first comment was this : " *Now* we shall see if I let M. Huet teach me any more classical geography ! " †

" He knew a great deal, but he would never give evidence of any knowledge at all. He directed all his energy to forgetting everything he had been taught because such was his good pleasure. No other explanation for this course has ever been discovered. . . . He would pass entire days without opening his lips, lolling in a chair, a little cane in his hand with which he flicked his shoes." Thus was his manhood described by the Princess Palatine,‡ the second wife of his uncle Orleans ; and in justice to Montausier it must be conceded that, in the boy whom he coerced and disciplined, he saw the promise of just such a man as his contemporaries describe the Dauphin to have been. " Monseigneur has plenty of brains," he reported to the King. " M. de Condom, with closer knowledge of them, would give the same assurance to Your Majesty. He can listen and understand and remember very well indeed when he wishes to do so, and this encourages us, but he does not always wish to do so, and it is this which disheartens us. If he does pay attention it is only for a very short time ; he hates taking trouble, and resents anything that is in any way serious and is not mere amusement. Conversation, even though it be of the lightest kind, wearies

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 51, *note*.

† Description of Dauphin's incapacity is confirmed by the Dutch Minister, Spanheim : *Relation de la Cour de France en* 1690, p. 115.

‡ *See* Druon : *op. cit.*, p. 354.

him ; he will not make any contribution to it himself, neither will he listen to a word that is said by others because he prefers to play at games that are too childish for his age."*

All conversation in which Montausier took part may have been distasteful to the Dauphin because it was impossible to find a topic from which maxims for the improvement of his mind or morals could not be twisted. When he took his first ride outside the palace grounds, and made some childish comment on a peasant's dwelling, he was bidden to dismount and to go inside. "This miserable hovel," said the governor, "houses a whole family who work unceasingly for the gold with which your palaces are glittering and who starve that your table may be supplied with luxuries."† Such ponderous object-lessons were not calculated to encourage a timid boy to open his mind freely, nor to give zest to his hours of recreation. To Bossuet the use of leisure was to find new material for thought, and to Montausier the desire for amusement was a symptom of depravity. It must be conceded to them that by their united efforts their charge was preserved from the temptations of a frivolous youth. "He is allowed only as much play as is necessary for health ; study is the only thing suited to his age."‡ So runs the report written for his royal father when he was thirteen.

It is clear that all the conditions of the Dauphin's training were abnormal. In himself he was merely a tiresome, indolent boy of a type that is familiar to every generation. From such material heroes and saints have been moulded by the processes of life, but in his case human intervention thwarted the sane developments of nature. At five years old he rode at the head of his own regiment in a review,§ at six he was provided with a model army which cost thirty thousand livres,‖ at ten Bossuet reported to Daniel Huet that Monseigneur had

* Petit, N.: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 96. † *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 39.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 87.
§ Dreyss: *Mémoires de Louis XIV*, February 8, 1666.
‖ Druon: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 310.

slain a boar,* and a few months later the King expressed his satisfaction to Montausier that his son showed so much skill as a sportsman and had succeeded in killing such a large quantity of game.† And when the Court travelled in the provinces, with all the pomp in which the King delighted, the Dauphin and his suite had a special place in the procession, and he was reminded constantly of his own importance as a personage. Exceptional balance of mind was needed under such circumstances to preserve any sense of proportion in his regard for men and things, for, even while he cowered under the domination of Montausier, he was never permitted to forget the tremendous fact of his father's greatness and his own inheritance, and this paradox in his daily life imposed a strain upon his reasoning powers. A student of child-nature might have seen his peril and found some means to deliver him. Bossuet never understood that child-nature offered material for study. He had adapted himself to the instruction of a child when he took office, and he was completely faithful to his purpose, but the child that his imagination had constructed, and for whom he wrote his books and prepared his lessons, bore no resemblance to the Dauphin.

The prince was confirmed at Versailles by the Archbishop of Paris when he was in his twelfth year, and during the fifteen months that followed Bossuet prepared him for his First Communion.‡ The instructions written by the greatest theologian of the age for his royal pupil have been preserved, and are well worthy of study.§ Had it been possible to wake that sluggish nature to real anticipation of a great experience and opportunity Bossuet's words were calculated to do so. We find again the uncompromising teaching of his sermons, the insistence on the logical consequences of the Faith that was so generally—and so lightly—held. "What hope is

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 51.

† *Ibid.*, p. 51, *note*.

‡ *Gazette*, 4 avril, 1674: "*Le Dauphin reçoit la Communion de son Précepteur.*"

§ *Œuvres*, vol. xxvi, pp. 1–5.

there for a man if he be in no wise altered when he has received Jesus Christ? How can anything ever touch him? After Communion we must so live as to make it clear that Jesus Christ is within us. And if so great a mystery is to have its true effect great preparations are needed."—His doctrine is wholly at variance with the easy methods of the Court confessors. The fashionable penitence, by which each year at Easter the world was reconciled to the Church and by Whitsuntide had resumed its former practices, appeared to him to be more dangerous than infidelity. "The true effect of Communion," he told the Dauphin, "is to make us love Jesus Christ and all that He is. . . . He who receives Jesus Christ should live entirely for Him. . . . Jesus Christ should be the joy of his life, and should possess him soul and body."

And the Dauphin, who strove to forget the secular knowledge imparted by his teacher, did preserve some remembrance of this other form of teaching. In after years the occasions when he resisted the King's will were very rare, but in 1694 he refused to make a concession to custom which involved him in spiritual insincerity. It was not his intention to alter his way of living, and he would not pretend to do so at the bidding of Père La Chaise, of Bourdaloue, or even of his royal father. He owed obedience to the King in all else, he said, but in that which touched his conscience he must rule himself.*

The pupil of Bossuet, when he made that stand for honesty, demonstrated that there had survived within him some hidden principle which could overrule the habit of sloth, both physical and mental, by which he was enslaved. The holy fear that had been a part of Bossuet's teaching on the Sacrament possessed him, and he would not be persuaded to compromise, even when compromise was so plainly the way of least resistance. Very early in their connection Bossuet had discerned in him "a perception of the Sacred Mysteries in spite of all his carelessness . . . simplicity, sincerity, kindliness." There the

* Quesnel: *Correspondance*, vol. i, p. 300 (à Vaucel, 14 mai, 1694).

priest rather than the schoolmaster is speaking ; it was in spiritual qualities that his discernment was trained by practice, and it was on the spiritual side that he read the possibilities of the Dauphin's character aright. There, and there only, could he seek hope and consolation ; all his other projects for training intellect and taste were utterly defeated. When the Dauphin was sixteen the dismal facts had broken through all the defences of Bossuet's optimism. " Monseigneur grows so old that he cannot be under our care much longer," he wrote to Bellefonds ; " there is a great deal to bear in dealing with a mind so inattentive as his ; there is no visible response, and one can only, as St. Paul says, ' Against hope believe in hope.' Although his general tendencies are satisfactory, they are so insecure that very little effort would be needed to sweep them all away. I should be more content if I saw a firm foundation anywhere, but perhaps God will achieve what we desire without us."*

The memoirs of the period cannot be trusted for revelation of the Dauphin's inner history. Probably development was arrested by terror of Montausier, and fear of his father quelled any later impulse towards expansion. Thus the son and heir of Louis XIV began life with a heavy handicap. And that which God may have achieved in him was hidden. He died very suddenly in the month of April, and at Easter he, to whom the Sacred Mysteries were a reality, had made his peace with God.† This was in 1711, seven years after the death of his old tutor and a still longer time after the cessation of any intercourse between them.

Bossuet left no record of his own view of that ten years of labour in the Dauphin's schoolroom ; probably they were more tolerable in retrospect than in actual experience, and the bitterness of failure in regard to their primary object was softened to his remembrance by their fruitfulness for himself. It is not possible to form any real estimate of the result to his intellectual develop-

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 156.

† Princess Palatine : *Correspondance*, vol. i, p. 130.

ment of that interlude in his ministrations as a priest. For ten years he gave six hours daily to instruction, and his day was divided by the morning, afternoon, and evening lessons. During that period he was required to move with the Court between the Louvre, St. Germain, Versailles and Fontainebleau, and the use of his time would hardly have been more restricted by the Rule of the Religious. Moreover, the monotony of daily life was not lessened by the magnificence of its background, and it is proof of intellectual energy of no common order that he was able to rise above the puerile contentions of the royal schoolroom.

For the first half of his term of office there were human and personal claims upon him in his capacity as priest which occupied all the time and power that was not concentrated on the Dauphin, but after the retirement of La Vallière and his own subsequent defeat by Madame de Montespan, there was leisure and energy to spare. It was then that his literary career began. In five years, besides the Histories of France and of the World, he wrote for the benefit of his pupil *La Politique tirée de l'Ecriture Sainte*, which has aroused the wrath of so many critics, and *La Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même*—a treatise in religious philosophy which has been studied by each successive generation since it appeared. And when he framed his Scripture lessons, and strove to instil into the prince's mind a comprehension of the Church's teaching simple enough and deep enough to survive the challenge of the world's opinion, he laid the foundation in his own mind of the two volumes which gained for him high rank among spiritual teachers : his *Méditations sur les Evangiles* and *Elévations sur les Mystères*. All this is evidence of his eagerness to acquire knowledge and to impart it. It was the excess of eagerness that defeated its own object; in the forward rush of his own intellect he forgot to smooth the path for the wayward, timorous child entrusted to his guidance.

" You promised that you would give me as much help as was possible, and you do not do it." That reproach was addressed to him by a child and it was recorded by a

valet,* yet in it lies the essence of his failure. The eulogists of the great theologian can cite, as proof of his devotion to his task, the schemes he made and the books he wrote for the instruction of the Dauphin. But if Bossuet had been less richly endowed, if the precious gift of mental and spiritual vision had not been his in such full measure, it might have been less easy for him to forget the shrinking terror of the little prince before the violence of Montausier. His disapproval, even if unexpressed, must have had effect in mitigating the treatment from which his pupil suffered, but his thoughts were engrossed by other matters. He dreamed of the perfect training of a perfect prince, and his own great intellect developed as he dreamed, but meanwhile the mind and will of the boy, whose actual daily life he shared, were crushed and twisted by the brutal hands of the governor. And as a result of the great scholar's thought and enterprise and care, a puzzled world beheld that type and pattern of ineptitude—the Elder Dauphin.

* Dubois de Lestourmières : *Journal*, July 8, 1671.

Chapter XI. *The Court Ecclesiastic*

BOSSUET'S position with Montausier, and his relation with Court personages generally, were sensibly affected by the fact that he was a bishop. In all memoirs that mention him after he entered the household of the Dauphin the plebeian name with which he was born is ignored and he appears as Monseigneur de Condom. Condom is a little city in Gascony not far from Villefranche and nearly four hundred miles distant from Paris. The royal edict which conferred the bishopric on the Abbé Bossuet is dated September 13, 1669, but the Papal Bull required to confirm it was delayed by the death of Pope Clement IX and the intrigues which hindered the election of his successor Clement X. It was not issued until June 16, 1670. The months of delay, unwelcome though they must have been, were fully occupied with preparations. A citizen of Condom, Bégue Plieux by name, was in Paris on business in the autumn of 1669, and, on behalf of himself and his colleagues, he visited the bishop-elect and put it on record * that he was the most genial and friendly of men, that all his intentions towards his future flock were of the kindliest, and that he hoped to appear among them before Easter. During that winter his future honours and responsibilities provided Bossuet with endless subject for thought and speculation.

His experience at Metz had made him familiar with the prevalent abuse of ecclesiastical patronage and its results, and the tradition of the Bishopric of Condom was on a level even lower than that of Metz. A century earlier it had been held by Jean de Monluc, a very valiant soldier who had never received even clerk's orders. He was, however, a champion of the Church against the Huguenots, and drilled the troops he had raised for the suppression of the Protestants of Nérac within the walls of the Cathedral of Condom.† Charles Louis de Lorraine, the son of the Cardinal de Guise and Charlotte des Essarts, mistress of Henri IV, held the see immediately

* Plieux, A.: *L'Episcopat de Bossuet à Condom*, appendix.

† Plieux, A.: *op. cit.*, p. 7.

before Bossuet, and his appointment was more scandalous than that of Monluc. In his youth his magnificence had aroused the jealousy of Louis XIII, and wild extravagance at length brought him to poverty. Condom was worth sixty thousand livres annually, and an income was necessary to him. He obtained the bishopric in 1660, spent most of the following years in Paris striving to wrest its revenues from his creditors, and died at Auteuil in July 1668.* The royal edict † appointing Bossuet declares that the King relies, for this important post, on the government of such a bishop as he is likely to become.

If the prospect of organizing and reforming a neglected diocese stirred ambition the temptation was in too austere a form to be a serious danger, and a loyal follower of Vincent de Paul could cherish eager anticipations of the labours awaiting him at Condom without neglecting any of the maxims inculcated at St. Lazare. But, in fact, whatever plans Bossuet may have made during the year that succeeded his appointment were wasted, for it was destined that he should never visit Condom. The death of Clement IX in November imposed one obstacle, and when, in June, he had received the Papal sanction and his way seemed clear, the death of Madame and the royal command that he should preach her funeral sermon intervened. Before the excitement roused by that great feat of oratory had subsided Périgny died, and Bossuet was appointed tutor to the Dauphin.

It is plain that at first he contemplated directing the affairs of the diocese from Paris. He was consecrated bishop September 22, 1670, and he deputed his kinsman Hugues Janon, Canon of St. Juste at Lyons, to take formal possession of the bishop's throne in the cathedral after a solemn entry into the city of Condom. Nearly a year later he published his Episcopal Ordinances, as if his authority was likely to be permanent, describing himself as present with his people in spirit although his bodily presence was withheld by the important claim of which

* Plieux, A.: *op. cit.*, p. 8.

† Dated September 13, 1669.

they were aware.* His intention of governing his diocese according to the rules recommended by Vincent de Paul was not disturbed by his inability to visit it. The organization of Conferences was the primary endeavour of the reformer of that period. The first-fruits of the great Mission at Metz had been the establishment of Conferences by as many of the clergy in the diocese as had been able to respond to the spirit of St. Lazare. Unfortunately Condom had never been awakened to that spirit, and the ordinance of the new bishop provoked resentment. His use of authority seems, indeed, to have been unduly vigorous. He divided the diocese into districts, and the clergy, religious and secular, were commanded to meet in a parish church once every month for an address, and for discussion of such subjects as faith, morals, the sacraments and the conditions of reception and administration, the methods of spiritual advance—individual and in the guidance of others. The meetings were to last two hours, and every priest in the diocese was required to attend wearing a cassock.

Ostensibly the scheme was one for general edification and the claim it made is in no wise unreasonable. But the diocese of Condom had fallen on evil days ; there were churches left unserved for which revenues were drawn, and the priests and religious took little interest in the topics chosen for the Conferences. It was a definite enforcement of discipline to gather these persons together every month, and if any one was absent he was required to give very sufficient explanation. The new bishop intended to deal severely with absentee incumbents, and the ordinance respecting Conferences hid drastic provisions under a mild appearance. The future administration of Meaux, and the vigorous suppression of rebels and malcontents that characterized it, was foreshadowed by the experiences of the clergy of Condom under a bishop whom they never saw. And the anomaly of his position only became clear to Bossuet when he found that

* 2*me* *Ordonnance*, 16 juin, 1671, *à Agen, chez Jean Goyau*. For account of Episcopal Government of Bossuet at Condom see *Correspondance*, vol. i, appendix xi; and Plieux: *op. cit.*

his will was contested. He could not insist on conformity with a principle which his own conduct did not uphold. There was good reason that the Bishop of Condom should remain in Paris, but he was as much an absentee as if the reason had been frivolous, and therefore in October 1671 he resigned.

His resignation may seem to be a necessity of honourable dealing, but if he had retained his revenues and governed from a distance he would not have been criticized by his contemporaries, and his resignation left him poor and without provision for the future. He did, in fact, accept the Priory of Plessis left vacant by his successor at Condom, in addition to certain other benefices,* and by so doing he incurred the disapproval of Bellefonds. But Bossuet had come to middle age with an unblemished reputation ; in his life there had not been the period of rebellion whose after effect is shown in meticulous adherence to the letter of the law, and he was content in such matters to abide by the tradition of his generation. Bellefonds was the friend of Rancé and of Le Camus, Bishop of Grenoble (when he left Paris he came under the direction of the latter). These two had begun by claiming the fullest licence that was permitted to a priest even in those demoralized times ; then, after a sensational experience of conversion, they had both adopted the most rigid practice of asceticism. By their standards Bossuet was deplorably lax, and Bellefonds, who expressed himself with incautious openness to friends and enemies alike, remonstrated. The reply that he provoked is valuable as evidence of a capacity for patient friendliness in the writer, and still more as an expression of a great thinker's views on mundane matters.

" The abbey which the King has given me," wrote Bossuet, " has delivered me from anxieties which disturbed the peace of mind needful to me in my employment. Do not be afraid that my expenditure on worldly

* He held the Priory of Gassicourt and the Abbey of St. Lucien. *Correspondance*, vol. i, p. 254, *note*. For the accusations brought against him on this count *see* article by M. Rébelliau : *Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15, 1920.

things will be increased : luxuries of the table are as alien to my taste as to my condition. My kindred shall not be enriched from the wealth of the Church. I shall pay my debts as soon as I can : they are incurred for necessary expenses in ecclesiastical matters.

" And, after all, benefices are surely intended for those who serve the Church. So long as I have no more than is necessary to my position I do not know that I need to be scrupulous about accepting them : I shall not take more than that, and God is my witness that I do not intend to advance my own fortunes. When my term of service here is over I shall go without regret into retirement or to new labour as God calls me. With regard to the sum required to maintain me here it is difficult to fix it exactly, for there are unforeseen expenses. As far as I know myself I have no love of riches, and there are many things perhaps that I can do without ; but so far I have not found myself so good a manager as to make a bare sufficiency suffice me, and more than half my wits desert me if I am short of funds. Experience will teach me what I can do without.

" I shall be very grateful to you if you will write to me often as you have done in this instance. I will try so to behave that what I do will not in the end bring dishonour on the Church. I know I am blamed on some matters with regard to which I see, more clearly every day, that if I had acted otherwise I should have done no good at all. I admire strictness of life, but there are some conditions under which it is extremely difficult to observe rules exactly. If there is a certain root of good intention beneath all else, sooner or later it shows itself in action ; everything cannot be done at once. M. de Grenoble and I have often talked these questions over and are in agreement in principle. I pray that God may give me grace to follow him in holy practice."*

Here we get a clue to the reality behind the mask of impressive reputation. Bossuet, as he appeared to the world, was self-confident to the verge of arrogance, assertive of violent opinions, combative when he deemed

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 64.

it necessary ; but the real man as revealed in the rare intimacies of his life was always self-distrustful, fully aware that while he understood the need for single-minded service his own allegiance was only too frequently divided. The meekness with which he took rebuke from Bellefonds was not simulated ; there are many other instances where he gives evidence of the same spirit. Of him, as much as of any other man dwelling in the midst of the distractions and difficulties of ordinary life, it may be said that the austere elevation of his standard of conduct was of very little assistance to him amid the changes and chances of his actual experience. His mental powers were of abnormal strength, but his character was as much a medley of strength and weakness as that of other men, and there were occasions when his concentration on mental problems was in itself a hindrance to the close consideration of hourly conduct which occupied Rancé and Le Camus. At such times he was over-ready to be content with "a certain root of good intention."

The contradictory elements in his nature were displayed when he prepared himself for his consecration as bishop in September 1670. Besides the new spiritual responsibility, a plunge into the life of the Court awaited him, and all the traditions of his youth made it natural that he should choose St. Lazare as a place of Retreat during the ten days preceding the ceremony. He had the real intention of Retreat ; he meant to shut out the world, and he wrote only one letter. But the destination of that letter suggests his subconscious subjection to the influence of the world even in his most serious moments. For there is good evidence that it was addressed to Bussy Rabutin. It is a genial, friendly effusion written with the personality of his correspondent clearly in view and prompted by real gratification on the compliments he had received on his Court appointment. But despite its charm of easy sincerity it accords ill with the austere surroundings he had chosen. Perhaps it was a vein of intellectual vanity, latent but unacknowledged, rather than the spirit of the world which had made

Bussy's congratulations so particularly flattering. For Bussy represented a type of wit and culture which was outside the sphere of a scholar and theologian. In his early student days in Paris Bossuet had touched the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the legend of its delights was still fresh in the minds of men. The student, however much he may rejoice in his vocation, cherishes half envious admiration for the wit, with his swift effects and easy triumphs ; and the circle which had contained La Rochefoucauld and Madame de Sablé and Madame de Sévigné and Julie d'Angennes (before matrimony and ambition had corrupted her) had its own fascination for the sober theologian. Bussy had the genius of a critic when he chose to exercise it : he understood the art of words, and Bossuet's masterpiece, the Funeral Oration on Madame, had just been printed. They held in common, therefore, something that was independent of rank or calling or character, and the priest, pushing away his resolution of Retreat, responded to the courtier. Bossuet must have been aware of Bussy's reputation, and that the imprisonment and subsequent exile which he suffered were well-merited punishments for real offences—that he was cynical, vain, and entirely unscrupulous ; but fellowship in art, at that moment when his life was in the melting-pot of change, appeared to him as infinitely desirable. And thus it came to pass that Bossuet, from the silence of St. Lazare, sent the greeting of respectful friendship to Bussy Rabutin.*

The gradual ascent from the minor *bourgeoisie* to high estate was calculated to implant ambition in the breast of one not naturally disposed towards that failing. Bossuet maintained his defences against it, however ; he wrote always with an object and not to achieve literary success ; he did not fret for riches or great appointments. "Ask God on my behalf," he wrote to Bellefonds when his term of service to the Dauphin neared its close, "that I may really be as indifferent as I imagine myself to be regarding the change in my condition that must lie ahead."† Only when the commonest of temptations assumed its most

* *Correspondance*, vol. i, No. 39. † *Ibid.*, vol. ii, No. 156.

insidious guise did he become its victim. He could master the natural longing for wealth or external honours ; the desire to which he yielded was to stand well with others and to see other minds accept the opinions that had been matured within his own. And in the months of uncertainty when his office at Court had ended no accusation of intrigue for favour is brought against him. If he failed to maintain the indifference he desired he hid his failure from the world.

In March 1680 the Dauphin married Christina of Bavaria. Bossuet was appointed to the office of almoner in the household of the princess, and in company with Madame de Maintenon, with Bellefonds—recalled from exile—and with other great people of the Court, he went to meet her in her own country and bring her back in state. Madame de Sévigné, who seldom concerned herself much about Bossuet, observed that if this foreign bride regarded her almoner as an example of average French cleverness she would find disappointment waiting for her.* At the moment, however, Bossuet was more intent on learning the ceremonious duties of his new office than on disseminating knowledge. For indeed he was, at this particular stage, the Court ecclesiastic, and outwardly he was nothing else. The discipline of the Dauphin's regular routine was left behind, doubtless with infinite relief ; his new appointment gave him a reason for appearing at the Court, but it did not give him an object upon which, even in theory, he could concentrate energy and power. For eighteen months he remained in a position which was an anomaly considering his extraordinary powers—that of a bishop without a diocese and without definite employment of any kind. His birth hindered his fortunes. Those sees which fell vacant were, traditionally, reserved for the nobility, and Louis XIV was never disposed to overlook the claim of noble birth ; not until May 1681 did he find at his disposal a bishopric which fulfilled the necessary requirements. Dominique de Ligny, Bishop of Meaux, died at the end of April, and in May Bossuet was appointed his successor.

* Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. vi, No. 781.

The King wrote to him that—in the interest of Monseigneur, of the Dauphine, and of himself—it was desirable that Bossuet should be kept within reach of the Court : no diocese could be more suitable, therefore, than that of Meaux. The bishop would be able to fulfil the obligation of residence and yet, the distance being so easy a one, would not be alienated from the Court, where his presence would always be desired.*

At the King's command the appointment was announced as an important event by the Archbishop of Paris at an Assembly of Bishops † gathered at his palace. Even then Bossuet was destined by those in authority for a task of great difficulty which could not fail to make him one of the most notable figures in the Church in France before the year was out. The change in his condition was extremely swift : he had had two years of uncertainty, and his letters during that period show him to have been without any definite prospect for his personal life. He had used his time in controversial labour ; he was preparing his *Traité de la Communion* and was writing his account of the Conference with M. Claude, and in January 1680 he began his *Histoire des Variations des Églises Protestantes*. This great undertaking was seven years in maturing, and the original scheme did not foreshadow a work of such depth and comprehensiveness as eventually appeared.

Bossuet had become imbued with the true ardour of the historian during his years as tutor, and this subject, suggested to him in his first period of leisure, widened in scope as he proceeded with it. He desired for himself all the knowledge relating to it that was obtainable, and, as we have seen, his office at Court gave him exceptional opportunity for cultivating the society of learned men. Many literary schemes were undertaken by prominent scholars for the delectation of the young prince, and were only abandoned because, while they were still in embryo, it was discovered that the pupil for whose instruction they were intended had grown into a man and eschewed

* Bellon, E. : *Bossuet Directeur de Conscience*, p. 104.

† Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 174.

all study.* These schemes were not wasted, however, for they brought the theory of knowledge and its dissemination into prominence, and served as an incentive to the zeal of a royal tutor who was also a man of letters.

It was on his literary side that Bossuet came near to Mabillon and gained experience of a form of the Religious Life which contrasted sharply with that practised by Rancé. The reform of the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés was consequent on the great Maurist reform of French Benedictines in 1621.† From that date until the French Revolution the monks of St. Germain-des-Prés represented the purest erudition to be found in France. The whole movement sprang from the real desire of Richelieu to encourage learning and strengthen the arm of the Church by the most enduring of all methods ; and the perfect background prepared for Mabillon, " the typical Benedictine scholar," ‡ was a legacy from the despotic cardinal. Mabillon came to Paris in 1664 from the provincial monastery where he had spent his early years, summoned thither to labour at the preparation of new editions of the Fathers which had been entrusted to the monks of St. Maur. He was never a celebrated figure in the life of Paris (he is ignored by Madame de Sévigné and mentioned only once in the Memoirs of Saint-Simon), and it is possible that he and Bossuet met for the first time when the Bishop of Condom was appointed tutor to the Dauphin. About the same period Mabillon and his new edition of St. Bernard § awakened the interest and reverence of scholars, and it became the custom for the learned of differing schools of thought to assemble on Sundays, after Vespers in the Abbey Church, for conversation. These reunions were of the most serious kind ; nevertheless their inspiration was similar to that which had brought the Hôtel Rambouillet into being. The attempt to level class-antagon-

* *See* Druon: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 268.

† *See* Broglie, E. de: *Mabillon et la Société de St. Germain-des-Prés* (1888).

‡ Butler, Dom Cuthbert: *Benedictine Monachism*, p. 306.

§ Published 1667.

ism in the interest of culture made by the celebrated Arthenice, corresponded to the achievement of Mabillon in gathering together theologians of opposing schools to sharpen their wits on questions outside the problems that brought them into conflict. Possibly this form of intercourse was even more stimulating to the mind of Bossuet than that with which the meetings of the Little Council provided him. It is hardly credible that even his conception of the duties of a royal tutor could have been the sole inspiration of such a work as his study of the "History of the Universe." He composed it for the use of the Dauphin, but assuredly his vision of its usefulness went far beyond the limits of the royal schoolroom, and as a part of the literary adventure that marked his time of tutorship, it owed much to the new associates among whom he had sought relief from the atmosphere of Versailles or Fontainebleau.

The power that had full fruition in the "History of Protestant Variations" first declared itself in this study of universal history. Its unique characteristic, according to Voltaire,* was its successful application of the method of the orator to the avocation of the historian. If Bossuet did indeed achieve this combination the feat was entirely spontaneous; that which he said or wrote expressed the convictions that possessed him, and the assertion made by his secretary that no one of his books was undertaken with a view to literary reputation has a just claim on credence.† From the same source we learn that the main object of the Universal History was to emphasize the extreme importance of studying the Scriptures.‡ Obviously the writer had already saturated his memory with the actual text;§ if study and reference had been needed for the immediate purpose of his book it would never have taken form, and his awe and reverence for the Bible equalled his knowledge of it.

* *Siècle de Louis XIV*, vol. ii, ch. xxxii.

† Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 153. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

§ As an example of his position as a Biblical scholar there exists a complete translation of the Gospels into French drawn from his various published works. *See* Wallon, H. A.: *Les Saints Évangiles.*

The scheme of this work is to show the Divine direction of events as clearly in secular history as in that of the Chosen People, and he declared that scepticism, if it were honest, must inevitably surrender to his argument. His peculiar quality of self-assurance may on occasions have been lamentable in its effect upon his conduct, but in his writings it stood only for force and vividness : the open-minded reader can hardly fail to yield to the vehemence of his conviction. Those were days of such continual dispute on questions of theology that every phrase demanded careful scrutiny lest it should contain an unsuspected meaning, and to simple minds the broad theory that Bossuet propounded must have been welcome. God gave free-will to man, but He retained the power to mould the effect of its misuse and so fulfil His purpose for the universe ; that, briefly stated, was his thesis. It may be found in his Funeral Orations, and it coloured his view of life. His critics urge that his " History of the World " leaves a vast portion of the globe unnoticed, while his Funeral Orations omit such incidents as are not in accordance with his scheme. The criticism may be justified by facts without disturbing his claim to absolute sincerity. When once his mind, moving by a process of deliberate thought, became possessed by a great idea, he found the proof of it reflected in every subject that engaged him. Contradictory suggestions were not intentionally evaded, but rather overlooked by eyes focussed on a point above them. In this way he satisfied himself that the Faith might be proved by secular history, whether of nations or of persons, and equally at another stage he showed by the books of the Old Testament that absolute monarchy was, by Divine ordinance, the sole legitimate means by which a people should be governed.*

It must not be assumed, however, that he was indifferent to the response of other minds ; once he had given shape to his idea he was anxious for widespread recognition. We find him writing to the Abbé Diroys to suggest an awakening of interest in the " History of the

* *La Politique tirée de l'Écriture Sainte* (*Œuvres*, vol. xxiii).

Universe" among the learned of Rome and Italy.* Rancé had declared that this volume made the power of God in the ordering of the world so manifest that nothing had ever been written which was so well calculated to enlighten the ignorant.† No doubt this was a sufficient reason for making every effort to circulate it ; but there are indications of another motive for the urgency of Bossuet's request to Diroys. He does not disguise the normal desire of an author that his work should be known and applauded. Moreover, he seems to have shared a weakness common to the craft and to have looked askance at unsought criticism. His attention was directed to a manifest error in his book whereby a warrior is represented as taking refuge in a neighbouring village after he had been killed in action. The critic was Boursault, the dramatist.‡ He addressed the bishop with elaborate expressions of respect and his letter has survived,§ but it is not clear that it produced any reply ; certainly the mistake remained uncorrected in subsequent editions. When the book first appeared it was received with a chorus of praise from those whom Bossuet respected most sincerely, and episcopal state combined with intellectual repute to place him on a level far above that of his uninvited critic. And no doubt such intrusiveness deserved to be ignored. Yet it is possible that François de Sales, or even Le Camus, would have been able to accept correction from such a source and be grateful for it without derogation to their dignity. In Bossuet, the man of letters, we touch those evidences of the natural man which, in all the later phases of his vigorous use of life, were never in abeyance for very long.

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 227.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii, No. 222.

‡ His attack on Molière won him celebrity. For detail of this controversy *see* Des Granges : *Molière et Boursault.*

§ *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 220.

Chapter XII. *The Gallican Crisis*

IF Bossuet, at fifty, could have renounced all other means of influence save only the power of his pen his name would still be prominent in the history of his time, and the gain to his permanent reputation by such withdrawal from the feverish struggles of the moment would compensate for the loss in immediate prominence. Students of Bossuet, musing on his career after the lapse of centuries, may be tempted into speculation on such lines as these. Yet had he held aloof from public life and allowed the storm of controversy on questions vital to the Faith to rage while he remained in shelter, it would be necessary to form a completely new idea of the personality which bears his name. The man just as he was belongs to his country and his time—to France at a period of frenzied controversy—and being so whole-heartedly a Frenchman he was tenacious of the opinion known as Gallican.

It is possible that Englishmen are growing vague as to the doctrine that Gallicanism implied. It is true that the questions connected with it were finally determined in 1870, yet that act of obliteration cannot diminish its importance as a factor in the earlier development of the French nation. The claim of the French Church to self-government was made by St. Louis,* and in matters concerning faith and morals the Gallican spirit tended increasingly towards independence. Any assertion of absolute and supreme authority by the successor of St. Peter was met in France by determined opposition. No doubt the presence of the Pope at Avignon helped to consolidate the Gallican party, and when, after the Great Schism, an Œcumenical Council met at Constance Gallican influence predominated. On this Council, held in 1414, Chancellor Gerson was particularly active, and its celebrated Declaration, which subordinates the Pope to the decisions of the whole Church, is the chief bulwark of Gallican doctrine.†

* Pragmatic Sanction, 1268.

† Bossuet insists on its extreme antiquity although public definition did not come before 1415. See *Défense de la Déclaration*, vol. i, p. 15, and vol. ii, liv. vi, pp. 317–30.

At that period of unrest the University of Paris was the stronghold of Gallicanism, and its influence ruled the life of the capital and extended far beyond the boundaries of France. In process of time the *Parlement* became a formidable rival to the University, but the one point, in the midst of many contentions and jealousies, on which they were always in accord, was the maintenance of Gallican privilege against all aggression from beyond the Alps. If it had been otherwise, if the thunders of the *Parlement* had been met by silent opposition from the seat of learning, the Ultramontane faction might have triumphed. Jesuit acumen perceived this possibility, and in the years of chaos before the accession of Henri IV the Jesuits made a bid for the capture of the University. The attempt was far-reaching in effect, for the resistance it provoked brought Edmond Richer into prominence and was in part responsible for the Gallican crisis of 1682.

Richer began his career as a disciple of Bellarmin,* the great exponent of the Ultramontane theory,† who had dared to stigmatize certain decisions of the Council of Constance as "almost heretical."‡ The uncertainty which distracted the University and in which he had a share was not of long duration, however. Henri IV, by his munificence,§ secured the allegiance of the scholars, and in the case of Richer the reaction against Jesuit influence was violent. A follower of Bellarmin had special facilities for observing Jesuit methods of propaganda, and Richer feared that Ultramontane opinion would gain a hold on the unsuspecting. Therefore he clamoured for a clear definition of Gallican doctrine for acceptance by every Catholic in France. He had been Syndic of the Sorbonne, and was an indefatigable student of Gerson, whose works he had published ; these qualifications won him the attention of the *Parlement*, and in 1628 an attempt

* *See* Puyol, E. : *Edmond Richer*, p. 37.

† J. de Maistre declares that as theologian "*Bellarmin n'a point de supérieur pas même Bossuet.*" *See* Daudet, E.: *J. de Maistre et Blacas*, p. 154.

‡ Bossuet : *Défense*, etc., vol. ii, liv. v, p. 217.

§ Jourdain : *Hist. de l'Université de Paris*, p. 4.

was made, foreshadowing that of Louis XIV fifty-four years later, to impose the profession of Gallicanism throughout the realm.* His influence was not strong enough, however, to bring his project to fruition. He was opposed by Cardinal de Bérulle, and finally defeated by the intervention of Richelieu.†

The opponents of Richer appeared to have triumphed, but, in fact, his ideas had been given a form that was acceptable to other minds, and it would be hard to fix the degree of his responsibility for the gradual stiffening of Gallican opinion during the reign of Louis XIV. Between 1628 and 1682 a series of affairs which concerned the Church indicated that the spirit of independence was becoming formidable.

Mazarin, most secular of cardinals, was constantly at odds with Innocent X, and the young King made no attempt to smooth the relationship with Rome when power passed into his hands. In 1661 he was forcing Alexander VII to humiliating concessions as atonement for an offence against the French ambassador.‡ Two years later the Faculty of Theology, assembled at the Sorbonne, was encouraged to formulate the tenets of Richer in Six Articles definitely subversive of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility.§ In 1665 it was directed to censure two volumes written to support the supreme authority of Rome; and when Alexander VII condemned the censure, the *Parlement* passed an edict prohibiting the dissemination of the Papal Bull and decreeing that the judgment of the Sorbonne doctors should be upheld in places of education.‖ In 1667 Louis demonstrated the independence of his kingship still further when he arranged the separation and remarriage of Marie of Savoy, Queen of Portugal, without reference to Papal authority,¶ thereby repudiating the right of the Pope to intervene in the alliance of royal persons. This point was reached

* Puyol, E.: *op. cit.*, p. 155.
† Baillet: *Edmond Richer*, ch. vii.
‡ Legendre: *Hist. du Règne de Louis le Grand*, liv. 2.
§ *See* Appendix iv. ‖ Jourdain: *op. cit.*, p. 222.
¶ Gérin: *Louis XIV et le Saint-Siège*, vol. ii, ch. iii.

while Louis was still new to absolute monarchy. In the succeeding years he did not lessen in self-reliance, and the degree to which opinion in the kingdom was swayed by the individuality of the King should be distinctly recognized.

In the Memoir written for the Dauphin he paints himself in clear and impressive touches as the despot convinced of his Divine right to despotism. Phrases that would be exaggerated if they emanated from the most careful of historians carry conviction when they spring from the centre of royal consciousness. " He Who has set kings over men requires that they should be obeyed as His lieutenants, and reserves to Himself the right of judging what they do."* In that pronouncement there is infinite significance, as also in that other where the monarch describes to his heir the occasions when " standing, so to say, in place of God " a king will find himself endowed with the perceptions that are ordinarily regarded as Divine attributes. Many other passages having similar burden might be cited to convey the position which, in all good faith, the writer believed himself to occupy.

To understand the events that at a later stage were to have so profound an effect on the career of Bossuet it is essential to remember the point of self-adoration which had been reached by Louis XIV when he signed the Peace of Nymwegen. The ministers, Colbert and Louvois, who had built up his greatness, vied with each other in exalting his will as a force above all law ;† the lives as well as the fortunes of his subjects were literally dependent on his personal decisions ; no form of temporal power more absolute than his can be conceived, and in the public mind the spirit of patriotism was confused with a sentiment of worship for the person of the King. France had at that moment attained to greatness above all other nations, and in France the

* Dreyss : *Mémoires de Louis XIV*, vol. ii, p. 285.

† See *Mémoires d'Avrigny Sept*, 1679. " *Le Roi fut regardé des lors comme le plus glorieux prince de l'Europe et ses peuples commencerent cette année à lui donner le surnom de Grand* " (vol. iv, p. 57).

King reigned supreme. That was the situation, and it would have been a simple one enough if there had been no Rome beyond the Alps or no Sovereign Pontiff ruling there. But France was pre-eminently a Catholic country, and her King bore the title of Eldest Son of the Church ; moreover, Louis XIV was insistent on the orthodoxy of his subjects, and requisitioned, for the suppression of the theological opinions that differed materially from his own, the authority that he flouted when it crossed his inclinations. It must always be remembered that he regarded the Papacy as an integral part of the scheme for the governing of the world; but in that scheme, as he viewed it, there was no level above that on which he was himself enthroned, and the theory, sustained by Bellarmin with such infinite ability, of a Papacy holding the right to depose kings, appeared to him to be subversive to all law and order. The antagonism roused by Ultramontane suggestion made him the more rapacious in his grasp on all ecclesiastical power that lay within his reach, and there came at length a time when the assertion of his rights no longer satisfied him and he passed beyond their limit. If a diplomatist had occupied the See of Peter there might have been no crisis, but in September 1676 Innocent XI became Pope. He was a man of violent prejudices, saintly in personal life,* but obstinate and headstrong in public relations.† He began his reign with a grudge against France, and his hostility swiftly became apparent He and Louis XIV had found occasion for mutual discontent before he had been enthroned a year.

" No King of France was ever more sincerely devoted to the Faith of his fathers, but no King of France has ever been the cause of so much consternation to the Pope as Louis XIV "—so wrote a faithful son of France and of the Church,‡ and the contradictory intentions of the King were responsible for the dilemma which confronted loyal subjects who were also faithful Churchmen. Discord

* *See* account by Bishop Burnet : *Tracts* (1689), vol. i, p. 241.
† Legendre : *Mémoires*, pp. 38, 87.
‡ J. de Maistre : *Œuvres*, vol. iv, p. 157.

first became manifest on a question concerning the Religious Orders. Since Pope Leo X had bestowed on François I the right to appoint abbots and priors to religious houses* the successive rulers of France had regarded the various communities in their commercial aspect. To Mazarin the revenues of a religious foundation appeared to be specially provided as rewards for those who deserved well of their sovereign, and this view was transmitted to his pupil. Indeed, the abuse of patronage in this direction had become such an established usage that a King of France could not afford to indulge in reflections on the real purport of Religious Life. It was undoubtedly the appointment of secular superiors that was mainly responsible for deterioration in Religious Orders, but Louis XIV did not trouble himself about their spiritual failure. A vow which pledged obedience to a will other than his own derogated from the implicit submission he exacted of all his subjects, and the system that depended on such vows won no support from royal favour.

In his Memoir for the Dauphin there is a note on the uselessness of monks and an elaborate scheme for their discouragement.† Yet he realized, even in his youth, that the Religious Orders were too closely interwoven with the fabric of society to be made the subject of high-handed action : his aim was to keep them under his own dominion—he was too wise to attempt their suppression. It was recognized that in this direction Colbert was far less prudent than his master : to him the existence of companies of persons who regarded the Pope as their protector appeared as a grave menace to the safety of the State,‡ and when Innocent XI showed his intention of reforming the Religious Orders his apprehensions became acute. He perceived that the more closely the monks adhered to the purpose of their rule the more likely were they to become a force capable of opposition to secular authority. Moreover, if the constitution of a

* *Concordat*, 1516.

† Dreyss : *Mémoires de Louis XIV*, vol. ii, pp. 223, 297.

‡ Gérin : *L'Assemblée du Clergé de France de* 1682, p. 285.

monastery was to be restored to the design of its devout founders the vexed question of royal patronage must inevitably recur.

Even if monasticism had supplied the only material for dispute between King and Pope peace would have been gravely threatened. Among the omens of the coming struggle was an incident that roused an excitement greatly in excess of its importance : * that of the Convent at Charonne. A Superior was appointed by the King and the Archbishop, and deposed by Innocent XI in a Brief which the Council of State and the *Parlement* pronounced to be null and void. The rights of the question remained undetermined because creditors seized the goods of the Community and the nuns were scattered, but the course adopted on either side was significant of the point in mutual animosity which had been reached.

There can be no question that Innocent XI in every detail of his policy was governed by high motive, and in particular his interference with the Religious Orders domiciled in France sprang from a real desire to encourage the life of devotion on which the spiritual vitality of the Church depended. The purity and greatness of his aims were against the maintenance of peace, however, for if the contentions between France and Rome had been solely political no abiding enmity need have resulted. Unfortunately, sentiment became involved in them. Righteous indignation was opposed by patriotic fervour, and on either hand were forces that defied control. A single glance at the situation is sufficient to reveal its possibilities. Produce the theory of the Ultramontane far enough and the loyalty of a subject to his King—even the safety of the King's person—becomes dependent on the pleasure of the Pope : maintain the doctrine of Richer in its entirety and the Gallican Church repudiates the supremacy of Rome. The issues involved being of this nature it became the duty of all well-disposed persons to avert such a catastrophe as open warfare between Innocent and Louis. If any endeavours were made in that direction, however, they proved inadequate.

* Legendre : *Mémoires*, p. 40.

The question which was directly responsible for setting smouldering enmity ablaze concerned an ancient privilege of the Kings of France, dating from the Council of Orleans in 511 * and known as La Régale, by which when a bishopric was vacant the revenues fell to the Crown, together with all the patronage dependent on the see, until the new appointment had been confirmed, and registered at the proper court in Paris. Provence, Dauphiny, Guyenne, and Languedoc were exempt, but in 1608 the *Parlement* in Paris decreed that these provinces should be included under the same rule. The clergy concerned protested, and the decree was allowed to lapse until, in 1673, Colbert, inspired by the lust of dominion on behalf of his master which with him was an obsession, revived the declaration and insisted on obedience to it. There were twenty-nine bishops affected, and in two instances only was obedience refused. The two rebels were, according to Voltaire,† " unfortunately the two men in the kingdom who bore the highest character "—Pavillon, Bishop of Aleth, and Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers. Pavillon died in 1678, and Caulet was left as the solitary champion of a principle which he held to be vital to the existence of the Church of France. The decree was retrospective, and appointments not registered were to become void. The King's officers descended upon Pamiers and confiscated the bishop's goods as well as his revenues ; Caulet had appealed to Rome, but Papal authority was slow to move ; he was reduced to penury and his supporters were persecuted by the King's representatives with the rigour that springs from perverted loyalty. In August 1680 he died. The vehemence of his revolt, and the retribution that it brought upon him, had given too much prominence to his cause for it to perish with his death. And indeed it was not the details of administration in the diocese of Pamiers, or even the larger question of the extension of the rights of La Régale, for which he had suffered ;

* Claude Fleury (*Opuscules*, vol. ii, p. 627) gives 1147, but earlier date appears to be authenticated.

† *Siècle de Louis XIV*, vol. ii, ch. xxxv.

it had been his fate to come to shipwreck on a rock that loomed threateningly in front of those who guided the destinies of nations. A bishop of the Gallican Church had rebelled openly against the King, he had been admonished by the archbishop of his province, and his goods had been sequestrated by secular authority. The Pope had approved his conduct and rebuked his judges, and, while the members of his Cathedral Chapter were punished for their loyalty to him by exile or imprisonment, the successors whom the King appointed in their place were hindered in the performance of their duties by the ban of Papal excommunication.*

The chaos resulting from this clash of authority was plain to the eyes of all men, and the problem which the wise had desired to keep in abeyance was suddenly presented to the world in all its native difficulty. "It is very clear," says a shrewd observer † who bore an active part in the ensuing battle, "that if the Pope and the King had foreseen all that would result from this business they would have taken care at the beginning not to let it go so far." In fact the intervention of the Pope in the diocese of Pamiers was regarded as an invasion on Gallican liberties, and the counsellors who had influence with the King were more disposed to foster his resentment than to allay it.

The Chancellor, Le Tellier, was saturated with the political Gallicanism which had assumed so dangerous a form among the lawyers, and his alliance in interest and opinion with his son Louvois, Commander-in-chief of the King's Armies, made him the more formidable. Harlai de Champvallon, Archbishop of Paris, ranged himself openly on the side of the King against the Pope. He was a man of remarkable capacities, which he put to most evil use. With the aid of Madame de Montespan he had established himself in the good graces of Louis, and his reputation debarred him from all hope of favour from Innocent XI. Therefore the greater the power in the Church which his royal master could acquire, the

* Guillardin: *Hist. de Louis XIV*, vol. v, p. 63.

† Legendre: *Mémoires*, p. 44.

greater the possibilities of advantage to himself. It was his business to work out in detail and put into effect the plans that Colbert sketched in outline, and in the fulfilment of his task he showed himself to be an astute diplomatist.* And here, as in certain other questionable dealings, he had the support of Père La Chaise,† the King's confessor. The Jesuit lacked the intellectual ability possessed by the Archbishop, but as a courtier he was not less talented,‡ and at this period their interests were identical. They were both eager to exalt the position of the King and they were both equally indignant at the defiance of Caulet, who had aggravated his offence by his announcement that the extension of La Régale was designed to increase the scope of Jesuit patronage. As the extension did enormously increase the patronage of the Crown, and as Père La Chaise had absolute authority at that time to assign all benefices that were at the disposal of the King,§ the suggestion was not unwarranted.

It will be seen that personal rancour did much to confuse the great questions at issue, and at times the whole dispute assumed an aspect that seemed entirely political. Yet however active princes and magistrates and politicians might be in the affairs of the Church it was the clergy who, ultimately, were most concerned. And in no section of his policy as a ruler did Louis show himself more dexterous than in his dealings with the secular clergy. By a gradual process of aggression he fixed his hold on every centre where the Church might organize her strength.|| He suppressed councils of clergy in the provinces, and there was no appeal against a royal mandate that confined an offending ecclesiastic within the limits of his diocese. And most effective of all his regulations was that which prohibited direct communication between French bishops and the Pope : neither in person nor in writing might they appeal to Rome without

* Cosnac : *Mémoires*, vol. ii, p. 111 ; and Legendre : *Mémoires*, ch. v.
† *See* Bellet : *Père La Chaise*.
‡ Legendre : *Mémoires*, p. 178.
§ Lavisse : *Hist. de France*, vol. vii, part ii.
|| Gérin : *Nouvelle Apologie*, etc., p. 63

his sanction. The net had been so carefully manipulated that it enclosed all classes of the clergy when the breach with Innocent gave them as a body such great political importance. The priest who claimed the right to form an independent judgment on the relations between Church and State required a strong will as well as a clear brain, and when his claim was made he found himself suspected by his neighbours and bereft of influence. Submission to the Pope, as head of the Church, was still a duty, but the Pope was in Rome and quite inaccessible to ordinary persons, while the King had contrived to impose upon the imagination of his subjects a vision of himself as a presiding power against whose decisions there was no appeal.

The ascendancy thus acquired served him in good stead when he set himself to utilize theological opinion for the achievement of a political purpose. The clergy were between two fires, for, by the Gallican ruling, the Papal interference in the province of the Archbishop of Toulouse was as great an outrage on their privilege as the claim of the King on La Régale. The assertion of the independent authority of a bishop was fundamental to the whole Gallican position, and it was essentially a theological question. Because it had been challenged by the action of the Pope, the King and his ministers gained the support of many Churchmen of high principle. And a theological opinion became involved with political intrigue.

Chapter XIII. *A Clerical Assembly*

DURING his ten years of tutorship Bossuet held aloof from ecclesiastical politics. He might dispute with Huguenots or plunge into investigations of such subjects as occupied the Little Council, but vexed questions concerning Church and State were best avoided, and it is unlikely that the peaceful conferences in the Allée des Philosophes were ever disturbed by allusion to La Régale or to the Charonne Convent. When, at Easter in the year 1681, he preached before the King he paid a special tribute to the beauty of the Church's system as exemplified in France, attributing its perfections to " the prince who esteemed it his greatest honour to be known as the most zealous and the most submissive of the Church's children."*

At the moment the phrase was singularly inapplicable, and Bossuet seems to have formed a false conception of the situation with which his own interests were soon to be so vitally concerned. Certainly he did not realize the serious nature of the coming crisis, for he was so secure in his opinions that he undervalued the force of opposition to them, but even if he had had foreknowledge of the ordeal awaiting him it could not have altered his course of action. The course he followed was the inevitable result of his convictions, and these were not subject to alteration.

Nevertheless he had reason bitterly to regret the events that summoned him to proclaim his opinions to the world. By reason of them, while his celebrity was immeasurably increased, his fortunes suffered. In 1681, after a long period of uncertainty, he reached the moment when the promise of his future glowed most brilliantly. The diocese of Meaux was not a rich one, but it had the supreme advantage of lying within easy distance of Versailles. Moreover, it was murmured by those who knew the omens of advancement that the new bishop would be a cardinal ere long. Bossuet, in common with every other ecclesiastic about the Court, coveted that elevation, and he was deserving of the favour with King

* *Œuvres*, vol. x, p. 181.

and Pope without which it could not be achieved. At the time of his nomination to his bishopric there was reason to believe that the value of his high aims and immense learning was recognized by the supreme authorities, and that a great public career was opening before him. Possibly the sum of his service to the world would have been less had he mounted higher : in fact, no further prize awaited him after he went to Meaux.

It must be remembered that Bossuet had passed eleven years at Court—years that would have been intolerable to a man of his temperament if the majestic fascination of the King had not thrown a spell over his judgment. The admiration which he lavished on his royal master was entirely sincere, and his conviction that the royal authority was held as a direct commission from God Himself * was no less stable than his recognition of the successor of St. Peter as head of the Catholic Church. Authority stood in his mind for unity, and on unity depended the ultimate salvation of mankind. It was his misfortune that his lot was cast at a period when the two presentations of authority to which it was his duty to defer were not in accord, and the limits of their respective claims became confused. Yet the clash of obligation involved a test of character, and it showed him to be endowed with courage and with caution, the qualities essential for diplomacy. We have no evidence that he had knowledge, before the summer of 1681, of the acrimony with which the disputes between France and Rome were being maintained ; yet a stage had been reached long before that date which left little hope of peaceful settlement. There is a letter from Innocent to Louis of December 1679 † which threatens appalling consequences unless the claim to La Régale be immediately abandoned, and its only effect was to increase the severity practised towards Caulet and his adherents.

In fact La Régale offered itself as a convenient war-cry to both the opposing parties, while neither the dignity of Rome nor the liberties of France would have been

* See *Défense de la Déclaration*, vol. i, p. 174.

† Limiers : *Hist. du Règne de Louis XIV*, vol. v, pp. 87–94.

compromised by any conclusion with regard to it. Some conclusion was necessary, however, and in May of 1681 the King summoned an Ecclesiastical Assembly to discuss the question. A singular method was adopted for convening this assembly. It was composed of any bishops or archbishops who chanced to be in Paris at the time of the royal summons,* and Bossuet, as titular Bishop of Condom, had a place in it. Under the presidency of Harlai the gathering, fifty-two in number, discussed and suggested and resolved.

Their proceedings were summed up by Le Tellier, Archbishop of Rheims, a son of the Chancellor : " Bolder men," he wrote, " would have talked perhaps more boldly ; better men might have spoken more worthily ; we who are merely average have said what we thought best suited the occasion, not as an example to others, but as an attempt to stave off much worse evils which are threatening the Church."†

The only result of their deliberations was the decision to hold a more formal Assembly of Clergy immediately. Such assemblies were held in or near Paris every five years and were supposed to represent the opinion of the Church in France, each province electing four deputies, two of whom held episcopal rank. The elections were only nominal, however ; the choice of the deputies rested with the King,‡ and his choice for the celebrated Assembly of 1682 was not governed by any inclination to stave off the evils of open conflict with the Pope. Bossuet was selected as a deputy, and even at the time of his nomination he was still unaware of the extreme gravity of the approaching crisis—his allusions to it suggest eagerness rather than anxiety.§ His confidence gave place to apprehension, however, as the weeks passed and his knowledge increased.

In fact there was just cause for apprehension. The Assembly was coming to life in an atmosphere of political

* Gérin : *L'Assemblée*, etc., p. 62.
† Avrigny : *Mémoires Chron.*, vol. iii, p. 188.
‡ Gérin : *L'Assemblée*, etc., ch. iii.
§ *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 239.

intrigue,* and the cause which Bossuet held sacred could only suffer by association with political Gallicanism. "In all political systems," it has been said, "there are certain relationships which it is wiser to leave undefined"† —of such was the balance of power between Church and State in France, and at a moment when the head of the State in France was at variance with the head of the whole Church the desire for definitions manifested by the King's advisers was especially inopportune.

In 1663, when the Sorbonne had made its statement of Gallican doctrine, Bossuet regarded the measure as inadvisable,‡ and he could not fail to perceive that there were elements of danger connected with the Clerical Assembly from which the Sorbonne deliberations had been free. It was significant that among the deputies was Gerbais, the Sorbonne doctor, whose book, *De Causis Majoribus*, controverted the doctrine of Papal Infallibility and had been censured by the Pope a few months earlier.§ At their head, moreover, was Harlai, and of him it was said by Bossuet that he gave Colbert "the blind obedience of a valet."‖ Truly there was need for calm and balanced judgment in those who sought to guide opinion in that hour.

At the end of September a letter from Bossuet to Rancé explained that the Retreat at La Trappe, for which he had hoped, must be postponed. "The Assembly is to be held," he wrote, "and not only am I required to be of it, but also to preach the inaugural sermon. If it is impossible for me to join you in prayer, at least will you pray for me? This business is serious enough to be worth your efforts. You have had experience of Assemblies of Clergy and the sort of spirit which ordinarily dominates them. Some few indications suggest hope as regards this one, but it is not hope on which I dare rely, and it is set in the midst of many fears."¶

* Jervis: *Gallican Church*, vol. ii, p. 46.
† J. de Maistre: *Œuvres*, vol. ii, p. 165.
‡ Gérin: *L'Assemblée*, etc., p. 289.
§ *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 230. ‖ Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. i, p. 9.
¶ *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 241.

A note of consternation reverberates through these cautious phrases. The choice of Bossuet to preach the inaugural sermon was well advised, since no other member of the Assembly was so competent to instil moderate and prudent counsels, but the honour of selection to this office was of doubtful advantage to its recipient. Legendre, the secretary of Harlai, makes no secret of the fact that his master's jealousy at Bossuet's prospect of elevation to the purple was responsible for the selection.* A prominent place in an enterprise which was intended to be offensive to the Pope was not likely to serve as a stepping-stone to promotion, but Bossuet faced the difficulty with the composure that rarely failed him. It may be granted freely that he wished to save his own career. He was in favour at the Vatican as well as at Versailles, and he may have been sanguine enough to hope that the sincerity of his intentions would secure for him immunity from the dangers which encompassed other members of the Assembly. But it is equally true that personal anxiety held but a small place in his considerations as compared to his solicitude for the safety of the Faith and the welfare of France.

His opening sermon was a masterpiece of diplomacy. "I have endeavoured so to speak as equally to avoid offence to the Majesty of Rome and treason to the doctrines of the Gallican Church."† So did he write of it, and he added that he would have preached it as readily in Rome as in Paris. As was inevitable, it satisfied neither party. The Ultramontane regarded it as a torrent of vague eloquence when the occasion demanded a denunciation of infidelity ;‡ in the eyes of the militant Gallican, who desired a trumpet call that should serve as a challenge to Papalism, it failed completely of its purpose.

"I was forced to talk of the liberties of the Gallican Church, and I governed what I said about them by two rules : (1) Not to let them infringe in the slightest on

* Legendre : *Mémoires*, p. 47.
† *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 249.
‡ J. de Maistre : *Œuvres*, vol. ii, p. 281.

the true greatness of the Holy See. (2) To refer to them as they are understood by the bishops and not as they are understood by the politicians. . . . I may say that all who heard the sermon agreed that it inculcated peace and goodwill. If I may suppose it to be as effective in print as it was in delivery I shall have cause to give infinite thanks to God."*

The first question dealt with by the Assembly was that of La Régale. And here the King by his grasp on the exempted provinces was deliberately intruding on the rights of the bishops. Seventy years earlier under Henri IV the same measure had been hotly resisted as an unwarrantable attempt at tyranny,† but the times had changed and Louis XIV had methods of dealing with his subjects unknown to his predecessors. Over La Régale those who should have been his opponents made common cause with him. In the opinion of Bossuet the claim was ill-founded and ought never to have been brought forward.‡ It had been registered by *Parlement* nine years earlier, however, and opposition to it had taken a form offensive to Gallican sentiment. Moreover, the King made certain concessions which in some degree balanced the irregularity of his demands,§ and finally the question in itself had no real claim on the importance it had assumed.‖ And so Bossuet joined with the rest of the Assembly in their compliance with the King's desires, and a letter, drawn up either by him or by Le Tellier, was addressed to the Pope conveying, in conciliatory terms, the decision at which they had arrived and the circumstances that had led them to it. But Innocent was not responsive to these blandishments.¶ The Assembly had been convened to discuss a question on which he had already given his decision, and the fact of its existence was an offence. For three days the letter

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 249.

† Voltaire: *Siècle de Louis XIV*, vol. ii, ch. 35.

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 250.

§ *See* Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, part viii.

‖ "*Cette affaire est de petite importance*" (*Défense de la Déclaration*, vol. iii, p. 264).

¶ Guettée: *Hist. de l'Eglise de France*, vol. xi, p. 75.

remained unopened,* and as the days and weeks went by and no answer was vouchsafed the task of the peace-makers in France grew harder.

In his inaugural sermon † Bossuet had sounded a note of warning, lest there might be any among his hearers who regarded schism lightly. He had drawn a picture of Protestants abiding continually in "a confusion that is of hell itself," and urged the advantage of an unwavering hold on continuity: "Let us not stray from the ways our fathers followed. We must cling fast to the old system if we would hold to the old Faith." The words suggest anticipation of danger, but when they were spoken no man could forecast what shape it would assume. The ominous silence of Innocent after the letter from the Assembly concerning La Régale had reached him, encouraged the more turbulent spirits among the deputies to expound their views. They argued that as Gallican liberties had already been infringed the occasion should be seized for a clear definition of Gallican opinion.‡

Certain notes of the Abbé Fleury §—fragmentary, but suggestive—give us the key to the situation. From these we learn that it was the Archbishop of Rheims, egged on by his father, the Chancellor Le Tellier, who first proposed that Gallican opinion on the limits of Papal authority should be defined before their sittings ended. He was supported by the Bishop of Tournay, Gilbert de Choiseul, and vehemently opposed by Bossuet, who declared the moment to be notably unpropitious.‖ Argument availed little at this juncture, however, and the suggestion of Le Tellier found so many responsive echoes outside the Assembly ¶ that opposition was swept aside. Harlai and Père La Chaise referred it to the King

* Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, part ix. † *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 588.

‡ Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, part xi.

§ *See* Emery: *Nouveaux Opuscules*, p. 210. His contemporary, Saint-Fonds, bears witness to his accuracy. See *Correspondance Saint-Fonds*, Int.

‖ Cf. *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 251.

¶ Jervis: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 46.

and brought a royal order to proceed with it. At this point Bossuet, fertile in expedients, intervened again. He proposed, as a preliminary to other measures, that tradition regarding the relations of France and Rome should be exhaustively investigated. He was defeated by Harlai, who warned the King of the delay that such an investigation must involve. Colbert was pressing for decisive action, and the extreme party were not to be diverted from their purpose by such a transparent subterfuge.

There were days in the spring of 1682 when the menace of schism between France and Rome * assumed such vast proportions that other visions were perforce obscured. Bossuet must have faced anxiety and anguish of the most poignant kind, and it is likely that the composure which he maintained before the world was inspired by his sense of the great issues that might depend on his personal choice of action, and on the balance of his own unaided judgment. There is no means by which we may discover whether at the outset his choice of intimates among the deputies was governed by a deliberate policy. Whether prompted by diplomacy or chance, however, his choice secured him the confidence of the group whose violence in support of Gallican opinion seemed to court disaster.

In obedience to the royal order a committee of twelve was elected from the Assembly. These were to meet at the palace of the Archbishop and decide upon a formula of Gallican opinion which should ensure agreement throughout the Church in France. Bossuet was one of those selected, and the rest were, for the most part, deputies who had distinguished themselves by their vigorous expressions of defiance on the Papal question. Gerbais, as the recent object of a Papal censure, should have been excluded, but the provocative spirit prevailed, and he was elected.† Moreover, the office of secretary, charged with the task of giving written form to the decisions of the committee, fell to Choiseul, a recognized

* Jervis: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 53, *note*.
† Gérin: *L'Assemblée*, etc., p. 219.

extremist. There is a blank in the correspondence of Bossuet at this time, and the only clue to his state of mind during those weeks of tension is given by his secretary, Ledieu,* many years later. If these reminiscences are accurate his outward composure proceeded from a clear conviction as to the course that he must follow. The actual part that he played in these perilous negotiations was recorded by Fénelon,† and the account purports to be that given by himself in the friendly intercourse of their early relations. (The official minutes of the proceedings of the Twelve were destroyed.)

After prolonged deliberation it was decided to revive in substance the Six Articles formulated by the Sorbonne. These were dressed anew by Choiseul, but their guise was disapproved by Bossuet. A long argument ensued in which certain of the distinctions are of the utmost subtlety. It ended without a breach in friendliness, and at the desire of Choiseul the task of summarizing Gallican doctrine in terms that the whole world might understand was entrusted to Bossuet.‡ This must be regarded as the extreme moment of crisis, for there can be little doubt that if the uncompromising assertions of Choiseul had been published as the opinion of the Assembly of Clergy, wholesale excommunication must have ensued, and thence, the temper of the Assembly being what it was, the path led straight to schism. Bossuet had required wisdom and courage of no common order for the composition of the inaugural sermon, but the sacrifice involved by response to this new demand was incomparably greater. For the time was past when diplomacy could aid him. He had striven by every device he could command to prevent a measure that was ill-advised and perilous, and he had been defeated. He signified acceptance of defeat by assuming responsibility for that which he had combatted. As a definition of Gallican opinion must be made, he claimed the right to make it, for his faith was based on such a firm foundation of learn-

* *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 8, 9.
† Quoted by Fleury : *Nouveaux Opuscules*, p. 147.
‡ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

ing and reflection that, as he then believed, no man could challenge it. The result was the celebrated Four Articles. They are sufficiently concise to be quoted in full.

I. St. Peter and his successors, vicars of Christ, and likewise the Church itself, have received from God power in things spiritual and pertaining to salvation, but not in things temporal and civil. Consequently kings and princes in respect of their temporal affairs are not by the law of God subject to any ecclesiastical power, nor can they directly or indirectly be deposed by the authority of the Keys, nor can their subjects be dispensed from obedience to them or absolved from the oath of fidelity.

II. The fullness of power in things spiritual residing in the Holy See and in the successors of St. Peter does not alter the validity of the Decrees of the Council of Constance regarding the authority of General Councils as laid down in the fourth and fifth sessions, and the Gallican Church disapproves all doubt cast on their authority, or that their application should be restricted to occasions of schism.

III. Hence the exercise of Apostolic authority must be regulated by the Canons to which the whole world defers, and also the rules, customs, and principles of the Kingdom and Church of France must be preserved inviolable in the form approved and agreed by the Holy See and the Churches.

IV. In all questions of Faith the Pope holds the chief authority and his decisions affect all Churches and each Church individually, but if the Church does not concur in his decision it can be altered.*

The Four Articles were incorporated in a Declaration which explains that these opinions have been formulated for the assistance of the Church in France "in order that we may all speak the same thing and concur in the same doctrine."† On March 23 the King decreed that in his dominions their acceptance should be obliga-

* Fleury: *Opuscules*, vol. ii, p. 598.

† Jervis: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 51.

tory. "No one who refused to accept the doctrine of the Four Articles was to be permitted to teach theology."*

The impression produced by the Declaration is difficult to determine, but it is probable that Bossuet was justified in believing that his presentation of Gallican doctrine had the support of the Church of France. Although the King endeavoured to force conformity of opinion upon his subjects he suffered many defeats where he trespassed on the domain of conscience, and if dissentients from Gallicanism had been numerous they must have become articulate. In fact Bossuet, with his learning and his intense conviction, was eminently fitted to serve as the representative of his party, and the effect of his intervention in the counsels of the Twelve is altogether beyond calculation. "He was of infinite service to Rome"—writes his secretary in retrospective comment—"for it was intended to carry these affairs to dangerous extremes."†

His services were not of a kind to inspire sentiments of gratitude, however, and by rendering them he forfeited his chance of the advancement he most desired. In April the Pope replied with unmeasured indignation to the statement concerning La Régale, condemning all that the Assembly had done or might intend to do.‡ The violent spirits became the more mutinous, and the hope of peace receded with each succeeding meeting. At length, in June, the King, awakening suddenly to the imminence of a great peril, suspended the sittings till the autumn.

A curious letter from Burnet,§ who was in Paris at the time, indicates the greatness of the danger which Bossuet was attempting to hold in abeyance. "The old resolute Pope," he says, "sent a courier to France to the Internuntio with a Bull of Excommunication, which he required him to carry into the Assembly, and there to

* Isambert: *Anciennes Lois françaises*, vol. xix—quoted Guillardin, vol. v, p. 82.

† *Mémoires*, p. 175.

‡ Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, part x.

§ Burnet, Gilbert: *News from France* (1682), p. 37.

fulminate in his name against all the Assembly. This came to the knowledge of Cardinal d'Estrée, who, to prevent the ill effects of so hardy a step, sent presently by a courier with a strict charge to use all possible haste to get before the Pope's courier so the King might have timely notice of what the other was bringing, and this is now known to be the true reason for that sudden adjournment."

The Assembly of 1682 did not meet again, and to very many of the deputies the interference of their autocratic ruler may have been welcome. To Bossuet it was not so, however, for the work of the Assembly as he conceived it was not yet complete,* and he seems to have been sanguine that the fruit of its further deliberations would earn the approval of the Pope.† He was speedily disillusioned. Innocent XI was implacable in his resentment, and Papal powers which the Gallican definitions did not question were exercised against the Church in France. Thenceforward, when the King nominated a deputy of the Assembly to a vacant bishopric the Pope refused to confirm the nomination. For seven years Louis maintained his aggressive attitude towards Rome,‡ and continued to make these appointments regardless of the spiritual privations that they entailed upon his subjects.

"The thing that in all the world is most desired, and which is really the most important at the present juncture, is the death of the Pope." That, according to Madame de La Fayette § in 1689, was the prevailing sentiment in France. At that date, as a result of the dispute, thirty-five sees were vacant.

The imminent danger of the crisis in which Bossuet became prominent is seen more vividly by the light of these later events. Unless he denied the Faith in the form that he had professed and taught it, it was incumbent on him to uphold Gallican opinion. And even if

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 258.
† Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, part xxiv.
‡ Gérin: *L'Assemblée*, etc., ch. ix.
§ *Mémoires*, p. 115. Petitot, 2me série, vol. lxv.

his position as a deputy had been avoidable, the desire to proclaim that which he believed to be the truth was so strong an instinct within him that he could not have remained silent when momentous questions were under examination. Events as they developed gave him his place, and he accepted it, but they did not develop according to his wishes ; it was in his mastery over the schemes of others that he displayed his genius. So long as the stress continued, and the need for swift decision and for absolute self-control was constant, there was no room for thought about the cost. A time came, however, after discussion had been silenced, when he craved for expressions of approval from those whom he revered. In the autumn he wrote to Le Camus * describing and explaining his part in recent events. He waited in vain for a reply, and after six months' interval accepted the significance of silence. "Perhaps as I wrote to him about the interests of the Church he does not wish to discuss that subject with me : perhaps he disapproves my action or has some reason to hide his own opinions. Perhaps he is not altogether fair to me. The foundation of truth being saved, the rest is of that nature which St. Paul allows to be decided by the mind of each, and I have not as yet felt any self-reproach regarding my own conduct."†

At this period it is in his letters to Rancé (one of which contains the comment on Le Camus) that we catch glimpses of those intimate human aspects of the character of Bossuet which were hidden from the world, and it may be conjectured from them that a little bitterness was mingled with his thoughts of the Bishop of Grenoble.

The dilemma that involved the hierarchy of France had not found Le Camus unprepared. "May I entreat you beforehand, Monseigneur, if an Assembly should be held, to use your favour with His Majesty on my behalf that I may not be summoned to it."‡ Thus did he adjure the Chancellor, Le Tellier, in May 1681. When the

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 261. † *Ibid.*, No. 272.

‡ Bellet : *Vie de C. Le Camus*, p. 232.

storm broke he wrote incessantly from his mountain diocese to the two opposing camps. He protested often that the measures he was taking were calculated to lose him the favour of both sides,* but that he would give life itself to avert the danger that was threatening. Probably he was quite sincere in this last sentiment, for the spirit of sacrifice was manifest in the general conduct of his life. Moreover, the bitterness of his regret at the unhappy relations between France and Rome was fully justified. Yet actually while Bossuet struggled with his tremendous task his brother of Grenoble remained a critical spectator.

And at the next promotion Le Camus was made a cardinal.†

* Bellet: *Vie de C. Le Camus*, p. 234.

† Legendre: *Mémoires*, p. 72.

Chapter XIV. *The Defence*

THE position of Bossuet after the dismissal of the Assembly can only be appreciated if the diversity of view then existing within the Roman Church has been considered. Having examined Gallican doctrine it is necessary to consider the opinion known as Ultramontane, which was supported by an overwhelming majority in Italy and Spain. It has been summarized by a contemporary writer in the following terms:

I. The Church is a spiritual monarchy, absolute and independent.

II. The Pope, as head of the Church, has exclusive control of the Keys.

III. The power of the bishops proceeds from and is dependent upon his.

IV. He is infallible.

V. He is superior to the Councils.

VI. He alone holds the right to summon and to authorize them.

VII. He has authority, albeit indirectly, over the temporal powers of Christian princes.*

It is evident that Bossuet had not realized the strength of Ultramontane opinion, and that the clamorous remonstrance evoked by the publication of the Four Articles took him completely by surprise. His astonishment and dismay at an account of the prevailing sentiments in Rome were expressed to his correspondent, Diroys, in October 1682.† "I tremble at it"—he wrote—"is it possible! Bellarmin reigns supreme and in his own person represents tradition. To what a pass have we arrived if this is so and if the Pope is to condemn whatever this author disapproves! Formerly boldness stopped short of this; no one has dared to attack the Council of Constance or the Popes who upheld it. What reply are we to make to the heretics when they bring up this Council and its decrees, repeated at Bâle with the special sanction of Eugenius IV, and confirmed by Rome

* *Le Bouclier de la France* (1691), p. 24; attributed to Saint-George, Archbishop of Lyons.

† *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 260.

in sundry other ways? They will say 'if Eugenius IV was in the right in approving these decrees how can they be questioned? If he was wrong how are we to understand this alleged infallibility?'"

In fact there was danger at that moment of a formal censure on the Declaration of the Assembly from Innocent XI,* and all the objects and interests of Bossuet's life were jeopardized. He had considered the Declaration to be ill-timed, but when he framed the Four Articles he had no misgivings touching their orthodoxy. They epitomized (as later he was to demonstrate with such elaborate care) the Opinion of the University of Paris recognized and maintained for so many centuries, and the negation of them implied by Papal censure would have undermined the foundation of his scheme for reconciling the Reformers with the Church. His controversial experience assured him that to insist on Ultramontane doctrine was to confirm the Protestants in schism.†

His letters at this juncture would, unsupported, bear sufficient testimony to the strength of the conviction that possessed him. The evidence of his position as a Gallican does not, however, depend upon casual statements in his letters to his friends. His explanation and defence of the Four Articles is the most elaborate and considered expression of his thought that he ever committed to writing. He had desired to enlarge on the subject-matter of the Declaration when it was circulated in France, but Harlai refused permission.‡ Later, when a succession of writers of different nations and varying ability denounced the Gallican opinion he returned to his intention and amplified the original scheme. The result is that deep and learned study "The Defence of the Declaration."§

In the original preface he says that the two points he desires to demonstrate are (1) that Gallican doctrine is

* Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, part xvii.

† See *Défense de la Déclaration*, vol. i, p. 115.

‡ Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, part xiv.

§ Written in Latin—published, simultaneously with French translation, in three quarto vols., by C. F. Leroy in 1745.

Catholic and above censure ; (2) that it alone is the true doctrine, and if either opinion deserves censure it is that of its adversaries.* In his conclusion he declares that he has sought to justify his fellow Frenchmen, and especially the French bishops, against any suspicion of desiring to impair the prerogative of the Holy See.† The progress of the intervening argument gave scope for the employment of his vast erudition. In 1685 he finished it. Conditions then were not favourable to his purpose in writing it, however, for no reasoning would soften the tension between France and Rome. Nor did a more opportune occasion arise when, under Innocent XII, Louis abandoned his aggressive policy and accepted the form of peace imposed by Rome.

Bossuet had other tasks in hand, and, having given shape to the arguments for Gallican belief, he was content to wait for a summons to publish it. It was characteristic of him that he could set aside the product of three years of labour with complete tranquillity. He gave a manuscript copy of his book to Antoine de Noailles, the future cardinal, and another to the Abbé Fleury,‡ and returned to his great work on Protestant Variations § and to his disputes with Huguenot ministers. The adversaries of Gallicanism were not disposed to let the question rest, however, and in 1695 Roccaberti, Archbishop of Valentia, obtained from Innocent XII a commendatory Brief for his work on Papal authority, the contents of which seemed to Bossuet so offensive to France and to French opinion as to require protest.‖ In December the *Parlement* prohibited the sale of the book in France, and Bossuet, in consultation with the King,¶ decided to undertake the response to the Spaniard's challenge.

The response itself is the *Gallia Orthodoxa*, which he

* *Défense*, etc., vol. iii, p. 271.
† Ibid., *Corollaire*, part xii, p. 265.
‡ Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi: *P. justificatifs*.
§ Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 193.
‖ *See* Address to the King (*Œuvres*, vol. xxii, p. 617).
¶ *See* Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi: *P. justificatifs*.

joined as a preliminary dissertation to his original Defence of Gallicanism with evident intention of giving the whole book to the world. The fruits of a lifetime of study may be found in the Defence, but for that vividness and fire which Bossuet displayed in the heat of controversy we must look to the opening pages. It is no longer merely the Four Articles, that ill-timed statement of opinion, which concerns him :* in the attack of Roccaberti he finds a summons to champion the faith of Gallicans in every generation. The anonymity of the original treatise is thrown aside and he writes in his own name. Thus the great Defence assumed its final form. Of its three parts the first is given to that subject which Louis XIV esteemed the most important: the Divine Right of Kings. The next is concerned with the Councils of Constance and of Bâle, and those that followed them. The third and last is devoted to the study of Tradition, and the text is loaded with references and citations to prove that his faith, just as he held it, had descended to him from the dim ages of the past.† Point by point he examined the objections raised to Gallican orthodoxy at different periods, and the claim to absolute dominion made by successive Popes. He pondered the testimony of Scripture, the decisions of the Councils of the Church, the opinions of the Fathers. And then, holding the Four Articles to the light of all the evidence his great learning could supply, he declared that they contained no flaw ; that the Gallican doctrine was so rooted in tradition as to be unassailable.‡ The attack of Roccaberti seems to have aroused in him the same astonishment as he displayed at the contumacy of Protestants or Quietists. He was learning at the same time that many Churchmen did not sympathize with his desire to present the Catholic Faith to heretic nations in a form that encouraged voluntary acceptance, but the fact that his *Exposition* and its statement § regarding the primacy of Peter had

* See *Défense Diss. Prél.*, ch. x.
† *Ibid.*, vol. ii, ch. xx, pp. 317–320.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. iii, pp. 134, 264.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 114.

received the sanction of the Pope was his shield against the charges of his adversaries.

With the merits of the controversy we are not here concerned. Its interest lies in its effect upon the mind of Bossuet. The most severe among his critics could hardly dispute his devotion to the Church, and it is evident that in doing battle for his party he was inspired by the sense that he fought for the safety of the Faith.* Nothing could alter his conviction regarding the Gallican theory, yet the antagonism manifested towards himself as its spokesman, and the evident strength of the contrary opinion, remained with him as a disquieting remembrance. It may be that his zeal, increasing as his years advanced, to preserve the purity of the Faith from the innovations of experimentalists in criticism or in devotion, implied a reiterated protest of that loyalty which his adversaries had called in question. It had been said that he encouraged schism, and the suggestion rankled.†

There are only scattered indications of the shadow which the Gallican crisis cast on Bossuet's prospects, but as regards his mental outlook it was inevitable that, marking the tendencies of the present, he should look towards the future with misgiving. Any deflection from the truth as he held it disturbed him; and, in addition, he saw the Church exposed to a charge of variation if a doctrine that had been held by Catholics for centuries should ever be condemned. The years passed on, however, and his defence and explanation of Gallicanism was not given to the world. The Quietism controversy distracted him and interposed a fresh hindrance to publication. Yet he returned to his manuscript again and again ‡ to retouch and polish it, and, as scholar and man of letters, he must have recognized its worth. Finally, in its completed form, he consigned it to his nephew § as a most precious charge, with orders that it

* "*Cette doctrine relève merveilleusement la dignité et la véritable autorité de l'église catholique et du saint-siége*" (*Défense, Corollaire*, part xii, vol. iii, p. 264). † See *Diss. Prél.*, p. 16.

‡ Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 152, 211, 251.

§ For history of MS. *see* Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vi, *P. justificatifs*.

must not leave his hands except for those of the King. The danger of denunciation by authority in Rome loomed large in the mind of the Abbé Bossuet,* and Louis XIV had no desire to risk the revival of an ancient quarrel. Thus the book lay buried until all the contemporaries of its author were in their graves. At length, in 1730, a copy of the first manuscript was printed at Luxembourg, and the publication of the final version could no longer be avoided. It appeared simultaneously with the French translation in 1745.

Among students of Bossuet there have been some who question his authorship of the Defence, but those who are familiar with his controversial methods and his mode of thought will hardly need the external evidence to prove its authenticity. Most tragic among works of genius, it remains the perpetual memorial of his adherence to a losing cause.

* Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. iii, p. 202.

Chapter XV. *The Bishop in his Diocese*

A SHORT interval of leisure in February 1682 gave Bossuet an opportunity of making his first solemn entry into Meaux as bishop.* On several occasions he evinced his liking for display, and the little city with its steep streets and winding river offered an admirable background for any form of pageantry. He was accompanied by the Archbishop of Rheims and by the Bishops of Rochelle, Chalons,† and Tournay, and in the sheltered garden of the Bishop's palace, far removed from the fevered atmosphere of the Clerical Assembly, the quiet intercourse of friends prepared the way for their mutual concessions at the future Councils of the Twelve.

The few days that he could give to Meaux included Ash Wednesday, and Bossuet made this the occasion of his first sermon in his own cathedral. Thenceforward he was determined to spend all the great festivals with his flock,‡ and until age and infirmity defeated him he held to his resolve. The service of the King, the attractions of the Court, and his literary interests had claims that were not negligible, but his sense of the obligations of a bishop weighed with him even more heavily.

He was fifty-five when his life at Meaux began. For the first time he had the background of an established residence to which he could invite his friends and—which was even more important—a place where his library could be arranged. He kept books in Paris and in Germigny, but there were over two thousand arranged at Meaux,§ any one of which could be found at any moment when he desired to refer to it. The duties of a bishop who was also a Court ecclesiastic were sufficient to occupy all the energy of a man of ordinary powers, and Bossuet added to them the labours of a controversialist and an historian. Moreover, his innate desire for the life of prayer never left him, and it was during his

* Druon: *Bossuet à Meaux*, p. 33.

† Antoine de Noailles, afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Paris.

‡ Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 182.

§ *Revue Bossuet* (1901), p. 130.

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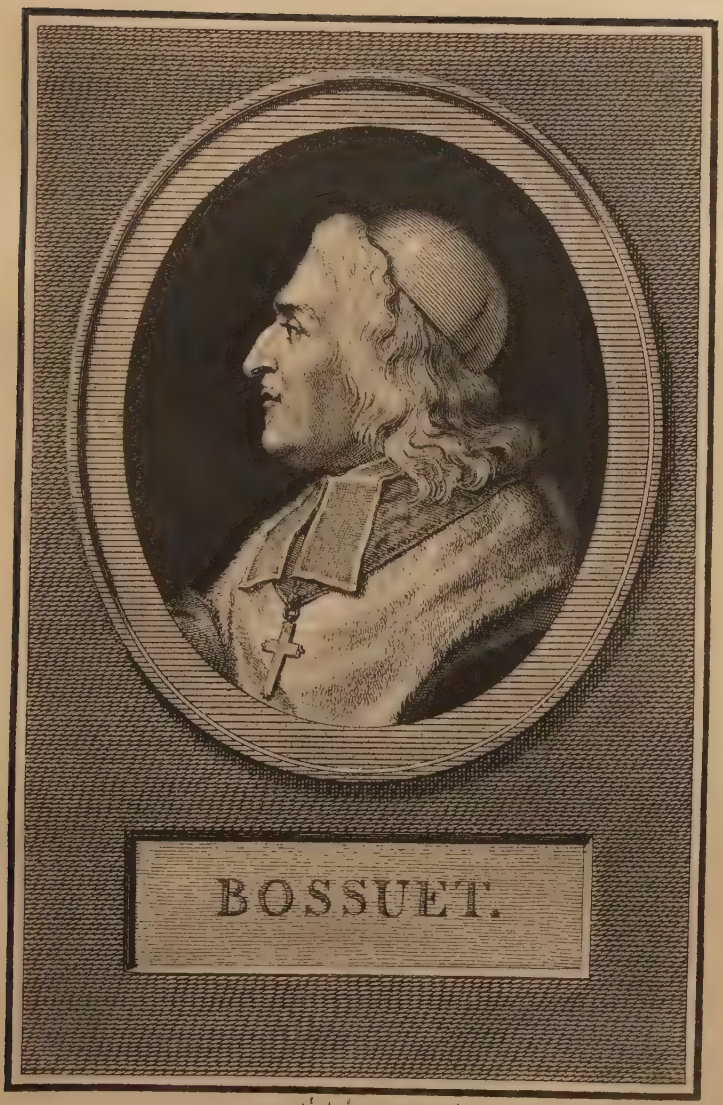
[illegible], p. 182.
[illegible]), p. 132.


BOSSUET.

years at Meaux that he wrote those treatises which testify to the reality of his spiritual experience. "It is marvellous to watch the untiring ardour with which this good Bishop works for the improvement of his diocese" —so wrote a contemporary.* His methods of work, sustained for seventeen years, are worthy of study.

It was his habit to make his episcopal visitation immediately after one of the great festivals, and he liked it to be regarded as a Mission. There were Mission priests from St. Lazare established at Creçy, and these prepared the way for him.† The day after his arrival he preached to the assembled people, and each day while he remained there were special sermons. The number brought for confirmation in central towns would sometimes reach eight hundred, and it was one of his cherished customs to celebrate and then, before the people made Communion, to instruct on the Sacred Mysteries and on Penitence, holding the Ciborium in his hand. Of his listeners many had been drawn in and brought to confession by the ministration of his Mission priests, and his teaching was intended to set the seal on the work of others. At the close of his visitation he carried the Blessed Sacrament in procession and gave Benediction.‡ It was his duty to inspect sacred buildings and to acquaint himself with the business-side of ecclesiastical matters in his diocese, and no doubt he fulfilled these obligations; but business matters were little to his taste, whereas the spiritual condition that prevailed among his flock was a matter of absorbing interest. We find him dealing with small complaints from the incumbents of country parishes which bear witness to the fatherly intimacy of his relations with them.§ There was one who declared that the people all went to the curate's Mass on Sunday and not to his. To which Bossuet proposed—as remedy—the transferring of the Parochial Mass to the time for which the

* "*Lettre Circre Visitation de Meaux*, 10 mai, 1684" (see *Revue Bossuet* (1900), p. 179).

† *Revue Bossuet* (1900), p. 230.

‡ *Ibid.* (1901), p. 23.

§ Druon: *op. cit.*, p. 38.

people showed their preference. There was another who bemoaned the neglect of parents and employers, faithful in personal practice, to send their children and dependents either for instruction or for worship.* The remedy here was not so simple, and probably he attempted to apply it from the pulpit, for it was his custom to collect hints from the clergy of such things as needed to be said with force and with authority, and to weave them into the sermon that he preached at High Mass in every place he visited.†

The Catechism ‡ which he compiled for the instruction of his flock bears witness to the minuteness of his care. He would not admit the suggestion of inequality in souls, or accept the excuse of the indolent curé that the mind of the peasant was not receptive. He knew by experience that "the common people" can accept the truths of the Catholic Faith with understanding, and that their ignorance was attributable to the neglect of those who should have taught them. Sometimes, as he travelled about his diocese, he found a company of children thoroughly grounded in the Faith, while a neighbouring hamlet would reveal depths of ignorance.§ And his visitations, while they roused and stimulated priests and people, were fruitful of knowledge to himself. He had experience of the intrigues which filled the lives of statesmen, courtiers, and ecclesiastics, and it was with eager interest that he detected in the villagers, who never ceased contention for the best seats in the Parish Church, the symptoms of the same disease. "It is the same passion of ambition as sets nations at war against each other and moves a man to overturn society that he himself may have the topmost place."‖ Thus Bossuet, in philosophic mood, saw Retz or Mazarin resuscitated in the truculent peasants whose disputes were brought for his decision.

The records prove, moreover, that his patience was of no common order, for he was ready to enter tolerantly

* *Revue Bossuet* (1900), p. 54.
† *Ibid.* (1901), p. 25.
‡ *Œuvres*, vol. v.
§ *Revue Bossuet* (1902), p. 245.
‖ *Œuvres*, vol. vii: *Traité de la Concupiscence*, ch. xvi.

into the detail of tiresome complication for which devout women are at times responsible. There was a Madame Delamarre, for instance, who refused absolutely to have any dealings with her parish priest and insisted on frequenting another church. In the country such practices acquire importance, and the lady had no good reason for her prejudice. The bishop's intervention was required to pacify the offended curé and direct his favoured neighbour.* It demands temper as well as judgment from a busy man to make adequate provision for such needs as these, and to respond to all the questionings of so heterogeneous a multitude as are included within the limits of a country diocese.† Undoubtedly Bossuet set a magnificent example in his scrupulous devotion to the duties of his office. It is true that he did not resign his bishopric when declining health kept him in Paris, and to that extent betrayed the standard which he had upheld so strenuously. But it is by the achievements, and by the faults, of his vigorous years that he should be judged, and, while his strength endured, none of the contests and adventures of his public career distracted him from his patient ministration to his people. The spirit of the world might trouble the surface of his life, but the fundamental principle of righteous living remained undisturbed.

It was a natural consequence of his view of the responsibility of the priest that the ordering of the seminary at Meaux should claim his serious attention. The Conferences of Clergy, which had caused so much discontent in his diocese of Condom, had been in use under his two predecessors at Meaux,‡ and he endeavoured to accentuate the idea of their importance by attending them at the cost of time and convenience. Here and there—as we strive to construct a picture of the man from the records of his various activities—new light is thrown by a personal reminiscence. An eye-witness writing of his address at

* *Recueil de tout ce qui c'est fait dans la paroisse St. Jean des deux Gemeaux* (1676–1686), quoted *Revue Bossuet* (1904).

† It consisted of about 230 parishes. *Revue Bossuet* (1900), p. 52.

‡ Bausset: *op. cit.*, liv. vii, part ix.

the second of his annual synods—September 28, 1683—reveals him in an unexpected semblance. "The conclusion of the synod was a curious one," the writer says, "for Monseigneur expressed his belief that he was primarily responsible for the sins of the diocese by reason of his own shortcomings and the bad example that he set. For he declared that a priest was so pledged to holiness that wherever he fell short of it he was a cause of scandal. To be less than saintly is to be scandalous—this he repeated several times, and then said his confiteor aloud."*

Bossuet took too solemn a view of his own position and of that of his hearers to have resorted to histrionics in addressing them; many of his letters, moreover, contain a similar avowal: it was his habitual reserve before the world that made this spoken outburst so astonishing. Indeed, his sense of vocation as a guide to others perpetually reminded him of his own weakness, and, when his active brain had leisure for introspection, he did not spare himself. Undoubtedly his success as a teacher of simple minds was largely due to his spiritual humility. When he dealt with souls he recognized his individual shortcomings, and he held such dealings as a sacred trust. After he went to Meaux he ceased to write his sermons, but his sense of responsibility in this part of his ministration did not diminish. His secretary records † that for twenty years his chief preparation was made kneeling at the foot of the Crucifix in his private chapel. He is described to us going from one parish to another during his visitations with his copy of the Gospels constantly at hand, musing on the means whereby the truths most needed could be most readily conveyed to the simple minds of those he was to teach, and not less intent on his preparation for such listeners as might assemble in a country church than he had been when a congregation of the greatest in the land awaited him. The picture suggests the records connected with Le Camus or with one of those bishops whose sanctity the Church has recognized, but it is Bossuet in one aspect only that

* Quoted *Revue Bossuet* (October 1904).

† Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 118.

it depicts. It is pleasant to regard him as the hard-working and devoted provincial bishop, realizing that ideal for which Vincent de Paul had fought so valiantly on the Queen Regent's Counsel of Conscience thirty years earlier, but it was not in this guise, we may be certain, that he saw himself.

"Pray for me," he said, after visiting a convent at Meaux, using the conventional phrase with which an ecclesiastic took leave of a religious.

"What would you have me ask for you, Monseigneur?" demanded the Superior.

And in Bossuet's reply his blunt sincerity plunged through convention: "Pray that I may not love the world," he said.*

"Spirit of the world, spirit of vanity and of sham, spirit of frivolity and of pleasure, spirit of self-interest and of ambition." Thus had he written from the Court † with eyes wide-opened to its besetting dangers. The passing of the years had dimmed his sight, though there were times when the veil lifted. In fact, while he exhorted the clergy of his diocese to the self-consecration demanded by their office, and maintained terms of sympathetic intimacy with the Abbot of La Trappe, he was swayed by the magic of the Court. His soaring intellect did not prevent him from taking delight in intercourse with princes, and all his learning was no defence against the temptation of following the fashions that prevailed in the great world. Perhaps the most lamentable instance of his weakness sprang from his relations with Condé. The great general, then Duc d'Enghien, had taken his father's place as Governor of the Province when Jacques Bénigne Bossuet was a schoolboy in Dijon, and was present when he passed his final *viva voce* examination in Paris.‡ Youth and rank and his personal endowments combined to make Condé a hero in the eyes of the French people. Bossuet, having thus touched him before the tragedy of his persecution and subsequent treason, remained faithful to his first

* Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 119. † *See* p. 125.

‡ *Revue Bossuet* (1901), pp. 93–103.

impression. An alliance that grew into real friendship sprang up between them. There is a letter in which the prince assured the bishop that there was no one living for whom he felt a warmer affection.* Bossuet was a favoured guest at Chantilly, and the pleasure-grounds were shown him by their owner. It was here that temptation lay in wait for him. The King, when the park at Versailles was being laid out, required that miniature lakes and canals and innumerable fountains should form part of the design.† Thereafter all who wished to be reckoned as denizens of the great world and to lay claim to culture developed an interest in hydraulics. Madame de Montespan was impossible to satisfy in her demand for fountains at Clagny. At Maintenon irrigation was one of the chief anxieties of its chatelaine ; and at Chantilly (as Bossuet in his great *Oraison Funèbre* ‡ recorded) the ceaseless splash of falling water refreshed the eye and ear of the prince's guests in whatever part of the pleasure-grounds they chanced to wander.

Condé was graciously pleased to exhibit these glories of his retreat to Bossuet. It was not a small thing to the Bishop that M. le Prince chose to discuss with him, as with an equal, the further embellishments that might be possible on his estate. The schoolboy of Dijon was still alive in the celebrated ecclesiastic, and as he strolled among the wooded avenues of Chantilly in intimate companionship with the hero of his youth there stirred within him a longing to have a part in the display which seemed to be an attribute of greatness. He was Bishop of Meaux, and he also like the great folk at Court had a country-house and pleasure-grounds. There was Germigny, three leagues from the cathedral town, where it was his pleasant duty to offer hospitality to distinguished guests as his predecessors had done before him. And the fact of this house and park gave him excuse for further intercourse with Condé. The Bishop's admiration of the fountains at Chantilly led to

* *Correspondance*, vol. iii, No. 344.
† Colbert : *Lettres, Instructions, et Mémoires*, vol. v, p. 355.
‡ *Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 623.

an offer from the Prince,* made in all good faith and generosity, of the services of his chief engineer, Guillaume Thierry, for the embellishment of Germigny. Bossuet accepted the offer ; he spent ten thousand livres under the direction of this skilful personage,† and wrote delightedly to the Prince that he had gained real knowledge of the science which the great world found so engrossing.‡

Let it be conceded that when temptation touched him at this vulnerable point he yielded to it. It was pleasant to have an interest in common with the Prince, and to have something to display to eminent guests that might arouse their envy ; and probably he did not regard the matter very gravely when he embarked upon it. A later incident, however, presents the venture in a more serious aspect. The vexed question of plurality of benefices was the subject discussed in a conference held by certain of his clergy and of the Fathers of the Oratory over which it was his duty to preside. The custom was condemned, and he gave his formal approval to the verdict, but it involved him in the necessity of explaining his retention of the revenues of the Abbey of St. Lucien and of two priories in addition to his bishopric. He did so by describing the constant hospitality afforded at Germigny to Protestants desiring instruction, and the expense incurred in consequence.§ The facts were unquestionable, and satisfied his hearers and himself, but possibly as he listened to the splash of the fountains on his next visit to his country-house, uneasy doubts may have disturbed his peace regarding the connection between his costly and admired improvements, and the work of propaganda which was held to justify the cost of hospitality at Germigny. Good men are constantly bad managers, and Bossuet acknowledged readily that he neglected consideration of ways and means, and that his more important avocations forced him to do so. His secretary || tells us that he was cheated for sixteen years

* *Correspondance*, vol. iii, No. 344. † *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 41, *note*.
‡ *Ibid.*, No. 349. § Bausset : *op. cit.*, liv. vii, part ix.
|| Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 39.

by his steward, Souin, whose misdeeds would never have been discovered if his nephew, the Abbé Bossuet, had not interfered. And here he was the willing prey of self-deception ; having once adopted an attitude of indifference towards money matters he covered all subsequent extravagances by the same excuse of preoccupation with labours more important than sordid business ; the fallacy of his view never dawned on him. Indeed, the venom of the Court, which was the world to him, benumbed his judgment. Fashion, public opinion, the code that other men approved and practised—these worked upon a will that supposed itself to be fixed solely on great endeavours of intellectual and spiritual import.

Visits to La Trappe * took place at intervals, and, even when he failed to find the time, the desire for them never slackened. Bossuet did not lower his aspirations, yet the march of events suggests that there were periods when he allowed himself, literally, to be too busy to maintain the defences of his spiritual life. The evidence of his usefulness in the spreading of God's Kingdom was so clear to the eyes of all men that it became the most insidious of temptations to himself. Self-assertion disguised itself as duty, and suggestions were attributed to conscience which may have had a wholly different origin. Yet the shadows of inconsistency and weakness were not so heavy as to obscure the personal power that made him a support to others. We shall see the beauty of his relations with the religious who came under his care as Bishop of Meaux, and the grandeur of the spiritual writings to which intercourse with them inspired him. He held a special place, moreover, in the eyes of courtiers, and he owed it as much to his righteousness and integrity as to his learning. When, in 1683, the young son of " La Sœur Louise de la Miséricorde " died on his first campaign, it was some higher quality than cleverness that made Bossuet the fittest person to go to the Great Carmel and break the news.† When, in 1687, Madame

* In 1682, 1684, 1686, 1687, 1690, 1691, 1695, 1696, 1698 (*Revue Bossuet* (1903), p. 173).

† Madame de Caylus : *Souvenirs*, p. 34.

de Montespan decided on retirement from Court she sent for Bossuet and made him her ambassador ; * and later, in the years when repentance seems to have gained some reality of hold on her, she sought interviews with him, and once, in 1695, accompanied by her sister, the Abbess of Fontevrault, she visited him at Germigny. And it may be regarded as a further tribute to his spiritual versatility that he was summoned to the deathbed of La Rochefoucauld.†

" The demand for his advice from all sorts of persons on every kind of question was a thing beyond all reckoning "—wrote his secretary; ‡ " a vast amount of business connected with the Court passed through his hands when he was at Versailles, and he laboured at it vigorously. It was absolutely confidential, and he never kept a note with relation to it." The records from all sources are of one who gave out persistently. In some of his letters to Bellefonds from the Court, and in a few addressed to Rancé at a later time, there is the demand for sympathy which is connected habitually with the idea of friendship, but such instances are infrequent. Ordinarily Bossuet considered himself, and was considered, as the depository of treasures for the use of others. A certain austerity of mind is needed to maintain such a position, and its isolation fosters self-sufficiency. A mentor does not develop the qualities of fellowship, and evidence of his intellectual egoism accumulated while the questionings and uncertainties of his deeper life only revealed themselves in rare moments of expansion. His confidence in the infallibility of his own judgment in all that concerned the Faith was acquired gradually, and with it came the tendency to regard all opposition as tantamount to dangerous heresy. Emanations from his brain had so stirred thought and opinion all over Europe that he had won an established place as champion of the Church before the world, and it seemed to him that, having been entrusted with this great and sacred mission, it was his

* Dangeau : *Journal*, vol. i, March 15, 1691.
† *See* Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. vi, No. 791.
‡ *Mémoires*, p. 204.

duty to insist on full deference to himself from other minds.

In his old age, when death was drawing very near, he was stirred to indignation by the audacity of a young scholar who dared to treat of a subject which he had regarded as peculiarly his own.* Here the vanity of the writer may have had its place, but in the main it was the intellectual autocrat who felt himself to be assailed, and his sense of Divine appointment gave a righteous glow to his resentment. With many men the fulfilment of vocation and the finding of their appointed place in life tends to enrich and ripen character. To him realization of his mission was a temptation ; it hindered the development of his deeper nature. And thus it came to pass that in the eyes of the world Bossuet, the Bishop, was represented by the majestic figure which for a time engrossed so much attention at the Court of Louis XIV and looms so importantly in the ecclesiastical history of the period : a figure which was not in any sense foreshadowed by that of the Abbé Bossuet who made his plunge into the life of Paris under the direction of Vincent de Paul.

Tradition has widened the gulf between promise and fulfilment ; the celebrity who imposed himself upon the imagination of his contemporaries, and who followed the example of his royal master in using all external means to enhance his dignity, is not sufficiently commemorated in his character as shepherd of souls. Recorded observation of him differs according to the prejudices of the observer. While in one direction he was revered especially for his tolerance and tenderness and patience, in another it was just these qualities that appeared to be lacking in him. He was unconscious of these contradictions or of any temptation to a dual life ; indeed, deliberate deception was alien to his nature, and the simplicity of the self-revelation that may be found in his Spiritual Letters was no less genuine than the arrogance of his attacks upon the ecclesiastics who dared to differ from him in opinion. So gradual was the growth of intellectual self-esteem that it had mastered him before

* Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 31.

he was aware of its existence. Questions demanding study and reflection came from without continuously, and to each in succession he gave his full capacity. Being thus absorbed he learnt to measure life by work accomplished. And so as years went on the world and the world's view engrossed him.

If there had been no Dauphin, and Condom, hundreds of miles from Paris and Versailles, had claimed and held its bishop, the development of Bossuet in mind and spirit might have been clearer, and his personal history less fruitful in items for regret. His life at Meaux, as we have indicated, is full of admirable scenes ; he occupied himself with the welfare of his people and was eager for the education of the children and the careful nursing of the sick. No other bishop dared to be so temperate in his use of the laws for coercing Protestants or was so patient in his endeavours to effect true conversion. For the figure of one whose literary labours were making his name famous throughout Europe Meaux is an admirable background. But unfortunately, Versailles lay seven leagues away, and Versailles holds greater place in relation to the life of Bossuet than did his diocese of Meaux.

Chapter XVI. *The Spirit of Versailles*

THE influence of the Court pressed hard on Bossuet. He belonged essentially to the age in which he lived—the age of which Louis XIV is the central figure. It was not under compulsion that he recognized the Divine right of kings ; it was a part of his conception of the universe, and in his eagerness to defend established institutions he became suspicious of all novelty. Thus he made himself liable to the charge that, with all his learning, he originated nothing.* In fact, the aim of his life was to restore a condition that belonged to the past—that unity of Christians after which he strove so fruitlessly—and his preoccupation with a former state did not tend to develop in him the qualities of the pioneer. As he grew older he paid less regard to the vices of the Court : the correction of them was no longer a part of his accepted life-work, and only by forgetting them could he preserve his admiration for the system that produced his royal master. It is not possible to trace the process by which his faith as a Christian and that as a subject were welded to so indissoluble a whole, but it should always be remembered that while the cult of the sovereign in many of his contemporaries was the offspring of self-interest with Bossuet it was spontaneous ; the King's majesty was part of the existing order designed by God which it was his mission to uphold.

At the close of his years of tutorship he drew up, ostensibly for the Dauphin, a theory of government founded on the Scriptures : *Politique tirée de l'Ecriture Sainte*. This was put aside for possible use in the future. He did not have it printed at the time of writing, and there is no evidence that he ever submitted it to the King ; he was satisfied when he had given expression to his thought. It remains as the explanation of a portion of his conduct which is frequently misjudged, and it shows us that his view of the King coincided with the view propounded by the King himself in his own Memoir for the Dauphin. " If God should withdraw His Hand," wrote Bossuet, " the world would become void ; if royal

* Sainte-Beuve : *Nouveaux Lundis*, vol. ii, p. 341.

authority is suspended the kingdom is a chaos."* "God has ordained that a king should be responsible to Him only. The right of a king is not the right to do evil, but his right sets him above human laws; he gives account only to God."† His conviction of the inherent excellence of monarchical government blinded him to the consequences of his proposition, and, indeed, a belief so absolute as his that the King held power by the ordinance of God carried with it faith that the use of power would be for the ultimate welfare of the people. For a good Christian the will of the King was the will of God, and he treated the idea of a constitutional monarchy as too absurd for the consideration of reasonable persons; ‡ yet, having gone thus far, he did not take the further step of asserting that the conduct of a king was admirable by reason of his kingship: the language of his sermons before the Court had not been that of adulation, and in compiling his treatise on Government he drew freely from these sermon notes.§

It was essential to his peace of mind that he should make no attempt to reconcile theory and experience. He knew the secrets of the Court; he had been the confidant of La Vallière, the ineffectual judge of Madame de Montespan; and his association with the lawyer class, who had knowledge of the condition of the people, made it impossible that he should be ignorant of the suffering which was the price of royal magnificence. There were ugly stories of individual defiance that passed from lip to lip. The woman whose son had been killed in the works at Versailles, who called the King a tyrant and was mercilessly flogged; the old man, using the same epithet, who cried that Ravaillac might reappear, and had his tongue cut out.¶ Bossuet was tender-hearted, and such things were not easy to forget; they were significant of the agony that was never seen by eyes

* *Œuvres*, vol. xxiii: *Politique tirée*, etc., liv. v, part iv, prop. i.

† *Ibid.*, vol. xv, 5^me^ *Avertissement contre Jurieu*, part xliv (*cf.* Dreyss: *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 285).

‡ *Ibid.*, part liii. § Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 112.

¶ Olivier d'Ormesson: *Journal* (14 juillet, 1668).

polite ; nevertheless, they did not touch the central dogma of his political faith, which was nothing less than monarchical infallibility. Society was conditioned by the will of the King, and the champion of unity and order would have betrayed his own cause by exposing its corruption and hypocrisy. It is true that at an earlier period he had striven to check the feverish lust of pleasure that prevailed at Court, and had made his protest at the darker stage that supervened; but the situation at Versailles * that amazed the world after the death of the neglected Queen did not disturb him, and thenceforward he never questioned any expression of the royal will.

Although the reign of Madame de Maintenon promoted certain interests that Bossuet had at heart it had no favourable effect upon his fortunes. His claim to the purple should have been a very strong one ; it cannot be doubted that he cherished a desire for this supreme distinction,† and the interest of Madame de Maintenon was of just that kind which might have obtained it for him. Moreover, when the See of Paris was left vacant by the death of Harlai rumour assigned it, not unfittingly, to the greatest Churchman of the day. The Noailles family was related by marriage to Madame de Maintenon, however, and therefore the prize fell to the future cardinal, who was then Bishop of Chalons. There is a letter from Bossuet to Madame d'Albert,‡ the nun of Jouarre, which shows that with the announcement a period of suspense was ended. " After so much vain speculation we may now rest assured that my bones will be laid among those of my predecessors, and that I shall end my days in labouring for the flock entrusted to my care."—It is the letter of a disappointed man.

The indifference of this devout lady towards the greatest ecclesiastic of the time has no self-evident explanation, yet certain subconscious instincts may account for it. She was the daughter of a felon, born in

* Well depicted in recent study : Saint-Réné Taillandier : *Madame de Maintenon* (1920).

† Griselle : *Lettres Inédites du Frère de Bossuet.*

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1270.

the precincts of a gaol,* and therefore she preferred those to whom great position came by right of inheritance to climbers who, like herself, had risen by force of ability and character. Also, being by temperament controlled and unemotional, she was attracted by the imaginative excursions of those who sought adventure in religion, and when Bossuet exposed the dangers of Quietism he destroyed a vision that had brought refreshment to her jaded spirit. Although there is no trace of friendship these two had much in common. Personal ambition was not a stronger motive in Madame de Maintenon than loyalty and devotion to the Church, and if she might but follow her own peculiar methods she had no greater desire than to labour for the good of souls. She did not attempt to conciliate public opinion but to command it, and in this she was extraordinarily successful. The same capacity developed in Bossuet as the years passed and his experience of mankind grew wider, and it appears to have been cultivated by many of his contemporaries. "If you are right-minded you will think of me with gratitude, Monseigneur"—said Montausier to the Dauphin when his governorship ended—"if you are not so your opinion will be valueless."† That is typical of the mental attitude adopted by those who were brought into close association with the King, towards themselves and their own conduct. The sublime self-assurance which kept their idol balanced on his pinnacle of greatness was reflected in those about him. Madame de Maintenon modestly refused to write a memoir of her life because—she said—only a saint would be able to enjoy reading it.‡ Bossuet, having once arrived at an opinion on a question submitted to his judgment, assigned to it all the weight of infallibility, and the maintenance of his personal conclusion became "God's affair."§ Any suggestion of a parallel between the great ecclesiastic and the uncrowned queen may now seem an absurdity,

* Noailles, P. de: *Hist. de Madame de Maintenon*, vol. i, ch. i.
† Madame de Sévigné: *Lettres*, vol. vi, No. 783.
‡ *See* Sainte-Beuve: *Causeries*, 28 juillet, 1851.
§ *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1551.

because later generations have learnt to pay homage to the one and smile over the other; but to the eyes of a courtier Madame de Maintenon had achieved a place on the ladder of fortune that was far higher than that of Bossuet, and in those days it was the courtiers who held control of reputation.

It was not his opinions only: the character of Bossuet also, in so far as it may be judged by outward manifestations, was materially affected by his contact with the Court. To him this was the world, and he was not proof against its dangers; yet in its effect upon his life the good is inextricably interwoven with the evil, for it gave him knowledge that books could not have taught him, and without which his genius could never have found full expression. If, on the one hand, we are tempted to regret the occasions of stumbling that arose from association with pomp and vanity, we are reminded, on the other, of the inspiration that he found in it. And Bossuet, as posterity regards him, cannot be separated from the Court, because Bossuet and the *Oraisons Funèbres* are indivisible. It was a Court fashion, part of the artificial impressiveness of the great, which demanded a panegyric on the dead, and from this fashion he snatched the greatest triumph of his whole career. It is proof of his genius that in approaching an established custom he dared to be original. It was his aim to modify the extravagant eulogy which was expected, and in its stead to trace the work of grace in the experience of his subject. If he could discover the essential lesson in the life he had been studying and impress it on his hearers he had achieved his purpose.

Such an innovation had no inherent claim to popularity. Society was accustomed to the language of compliment on these melancholy occasions, and anticipated emotional excitement rather than moral edification. Moreover, pulpit oratory was regarded as a fine art, and it was the well-chosen phrase and brilliant image that held the attention of the congregation rather than any precept they were intended to convey. Under such circumstances it was only genius of the very highest order

that could have commanded success for Bossuet's methods. Nor did the sense of inspiration lessen his desire for exactitude. It would seem that a funeral sermon on the Queen of England preached in a convent chapel might have been based on those events that were matter of common knowledge. These did not satisfy him, however, and there exists the Memoir composed by Madame de Motteville,* at the command of Madame, to provide him with the material that he required. In the case of Madame herself, as in that of Condé, the fruit of personal intimacy was sufficient complement to rumour, and when he was required to discourse of the Queen Consort before the Court any reference to fact would have been the height of indiscretion. Probably, of the six *Oraisons Funèbres* that he published, it was those on Anne de Gonzague, Princess Palatine, and on the Chancellor Le Tellier that demanded the most careful study. For the Chancellor he was supplied with a careful memoir by Claude le Peletier, kinsman and colleague of the dead man.† The difficulties were greater where the Princess Palatine was concerned, as a true record could not fail to be extremely scandalous, and the chronicle of her doings had to be drawn from many sources. Rancé had been her guide in her hour of conversion, and under his direction she wrote a statement of her spiritual ‡ experiences from which Bossuet quoted freely. We find him also writing to Madame de Beringhen, then reigning over the Abbey of Farmoutiers, where the Princess Anne had spent her early years, for details to fill in the background of his picture.§

These proofs of his indefatigable industry are of enormous interest, and again we see the welding of his methods as orator and as historian. In spite of his brilliant gifts, he thought no pains too great in preparation for the tasks that he appeared to discharge with such extra-

* *See* Hurel: *Orateurs Sacrés*, vol. ii, appendix vi.

† This still exists in MS. underlined and noted by the hand of Bossuet (*Revue Bossuet*, January 1902).

‡ Le Nain: *Vie de Dom A. J. le Boutillier de Rancé* (1719), liv. iii.

§ *Correspondance*, vol. iii, No. 337.

ordinary facility, and the listening world, while it paid tribute to the quality of spontaneity that rises above art, knew nothing of the toil inseparable from triumph. In fact, the vision of his subject that he needed when he faced his audience from the pulpit depended on his hours of solitary study ; with that secured his genius could establish contact with his listeners. Their response was essential ; unless they saw with him he could give them no share in his own discoveries. He showed, in the masterpiece that first wrested from them full recognition of his genius, the widowed Queen, in the many hours of prayer she had spent in the convent chapel, rendering thanks to God for just those misfortunes and bereavements which made her the object of general compassion. It is the ideal of the ascetic—the spirit that is covetous of suffering—that he ascribed to her, and his hearers shared his vision by the force of his own conviction.

There were years in the early period of his episcopate at Meaux when demands for the display of his peculiar power followed each other swiftly. In his study of Anne de Gonzague he touched a very high level.* Until then his subjects had been so nearly associated with the King that his treatment of them was inevitably trammelled, but the Princess Palatine gave him an opportunity for the portrayal of the Court without approaching the person of the King, and, during fifteen years of quiet observation, he had learnt the meaning of those subtle ambitions and excitements on which her life had centred. Sainte-Beuve declares that she was the most skilful diplomatist of her day,† and Bossuet, neglecting those passages in her career to which many of his hearers specially desired reference, dwelt on the pride of life in the guise of political ambition. Her escapades were notorious, and it was enough to indicate that she was of those widows condemned by St. Paul whose lives are lived in pleasure. Her repentance, in accordance with the taste and fashion of her day, was as public as her

* "*L'une des plus belles qu'il ait faites, et même que l'on puisse faire*" (La Bruyère à Condé—*Œuvres*, vol. iii, p. 272).

† *Port Royal*, vol. v, p. 536.

offences, and her history as blatantly dramatic as that of other heroines of the Fronde. Bossuet's presentation of her is distinguished by extreme refinement ; he succeeded, as in his sermon for Louise de La Vallière, in eliminating all that was obvious and tawdry, and, while he conveys the atmosphere of storm and tumult that shrouds the Regency, he had the art to keep the sensational episodes that could not be ignored subservient to his theme.

The fashionable crowd assembled in the chapel of the Great Carmel, and the nuns behind the grille, may have expected a skilful mingling of panegyric and sensational incident ; that which he gave them was the history of a miracle, and he believed that so marvellous a conversion would produce many others. If his hearers could see the work of grace in Anne de Gonzague as he saw it they would not need the summons of a human voice to bring them to repentance, and therefore the sole design of his Funeral Oration was to convey the impression which he had himself received. It was no longer his part in life to fish for souls in the great world of Paris, and it was not by his own desire that he addressed them. " He had no taste for this office," we are told,* and so pompous and artificial a method of celebrating Death was against his instincts. Here and there indeed, when it would seem that the actuality of the throng of listeners intrudes itself upon his consciousness, he strikes a note that suggests defiance. He was constant in insistence that the responsibility of preaching did not rest solely on the preacher. " Perhaps you are here to sit in judgment on my sermon—at the Last Judgment you will have to answer for your part in it " : so he warns his hearers, and, when he has led them to the consummation of that work of grace so marvellously demonstrated in the experience of the dead woman, he summons them to listen for the Voice of God within themselves.

The mind of Bossuet is reflected in the *Oraison Funèbre* on the Princess Palatine. His careful hold on fact and his dramatic sense were as essential to his study as colour

* Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 182.

and perspective to a painter, but it was a passion of religious fervour that gave his picture life. When, two years later, he was required to preach at the funeral of Condé his spirit found itself confined by the elaborate trappings of a great occasion. As an orator he touched his highest level, as a priest it may be doubted whether he satisfied himself. Madame de Sévigné describes the magnificence of the scene in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and notes approvingly that the lights and decoration cost one hundred thousand francs.* Bossuet would have recognized that pomp and circumstance were necessary to the obsequies of the First Prince of the Blood, yet the skeletons grouped around the bier, and the other sepulchral effects admired by Madame de Sévigné, were a hindrance to his purpose. He celebrated greatness fittingly, however, the admiration of a lifetime aiding him. Condé was a hero, but he had been a traitor, and no loyal subject, least of all a worshipper of monarchy, could venture to extenuate his guilt. Apart from that admission his funeral sermon was a panegyric—a great feat of oratory—and it was the last of Bossuet's efforts in that field. Whenever he faced it the thought of the sure approach of death filled him with awe, and the death of Condé summoned him to contemplate anew the hollowness of human triumph. For him there could be no triumph comparable to these rare moments when he seized and held the minds of other men and swayed their thought with his. When the moment passed we are told that he would go away in silence and remain hidden, making no reference at any time to his success.† Such reserve does not signalize indifference. Where his literary work was concerned he made no rule of silence ; he discussed its merits simply. It would seem that he was conscious of temptation only in the use of the greatest of his gifts. Friendship with Condé had gratified a worldly instinct, and with the ending of their friendship he closed the channel to the most worldly of his ambitions. This would seem to be the true explanation of

* Madame de Sévigné : *Lettres*, vol. viii, No. 1015.

† Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 181.

an announcement to which other and lower motives have been assigned; for fifteen years of vigorous life remained to him before his powers showed signs of waning, and if he had desired further triumph it must have been within his reach. It is true that he was never more dramatic than in the apostrophe with which he closed the most celebrated of his funeral orations, and called on the dead man to accept the final effort of the voice that had once been so familiar to his ears. But the dramatic impulse implied no insincerity; he did, indeed, reserve his eloquence thenceforward for the preaching of the Faith to the simple and the ignorant within his diocese of Meaux. "He had a great gift for adapting himself to the capacity of his hearers," comments his secretary.*

The death of Condé, and the renunciation which commemorated it, is a landmark in Bossuet's career. There is no reason to suppose that his friendship with the great soldier affected his relations with the Court; nevertheless, after their friendship ended those relations grew more formal and less kindly. The Court itself was changing; its brilliancy was on the wane, and new customs and ways of thought were coming into vogue; it was hard for one who was not of its inner circle to learn its altered language, and Bossuet, engrossed in literary and controversial schemes, lost spiritual hold in the great world. He was sixty when Condé died, and the years that were left to him were full of strife and disappointment, of which there is full record. Their deeper history can only be conjectured.

* Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 116.

Chapter XVII. *Bossuet and the Monasteries*

IN June 1681 Bossuet, in replying to congratulations on his appointment to Meaux, had told Rancé that he had planned for many years to begin his real episcopate, whenever the time for it came, with a Retreat at La Trappe. He asked his friend's permission humbly, and the desire he expresses had evidently taken strong hold upon him : " My heart is full of happiness when I think that I am going to accomplish my wish. I beg of you not to refuse me." *

He was assured of his welcome at La Trappe, but royal wishes and the plans for the Assembly intervened, and the beginning of his new life was very different from his anticipations of it. The hope and its disappointment were symbolic ; he aspired to a life maintained on the supernatural level in which each action was bound up with prayer, but events, actual and potential, called him to bear a part in the struggle that other men found so absorbing, and his practice lagged far behind his aspirations. His conviction that God had called him to the place he held consoled him. " My business is not my own business, but that of the Church " —" as I do not choose the work that fills my time I must be content with the leisure God permits."† It was thus that he strove to reconcile himself to the hindrance of overwhelming occupations. Nevertheless, in his dealings as director, and also with the Religious Communities under his care, we see the inner life of struggle which is so alien to the ordinary conception of the great bishop and theologian, the oracle of the Church in France. The evidence of it is present also in his correspondence with Bellefonds and Rancé, in all his connection with La Trappe, and in certain of his writings; and those to whom the hidden side of his nature is precious cannot fail to deplore that an epoch, so important and so sacred as the opening of his career as bishop, should have been invaded by his labours on the Clerical Assembly and all that they entailed.

When the King had dissolved the Assembly and set

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, No. 233. † *Ibid.*, vol. vi, Nos. 1156, 1157.

him free to take up the duties of his diocese he was weary and despondent. He wrote to ask Rancé to pray for him in his new life : " That I may not be a cause of scandal to the flock who should find in me an example." A later reference to the ordeal from which he had just emerged is significant : " May we never be required to meet again for so unfortunate a purpose."*

In that hour of reaction his thoughts turned with longing towards La Trappe, and we find his first moments of leisure, after he reached his diocese, devoted to the study of a treatise on monasticism,† which the Trappist abbot had drawn up for the use of his Community. Considering the conditions of his life in the previous months the fact is noteworthy. His initiation into his new duties had occupied the summer of 1682, and it was not till October that the long-desired journey to La Trappe was at last accomplished.

Armand de Rancé had rejected all intellectual intercourse : his stern conception of the monk's vocation repudiated the practices of the monks of St. Maur, and he demanded of his Trappists that they should mortify the natural desires of the mind as well as of the body. The appeal that Bossuet made, however, was possible to reconcile with the abbot's vigorous ordinances. Although he asked advice that claimed intellectual judgment on controversial questions, he pressed far more heavily for personal help, for prayers and spiritual stimulus. Thus there is evidence to show that the stern superior did not relax in the practice of his rule merely to find comfort and profit for himself, and that the friendship which united monk and controversialist for thirty years maintained its lofty standard of austerity. To estimate the value to Bossuet of his periodical Retreats it is necessary to recall such episodes of his life as his contact with Madame de Montespan in 1675, his labours on the Assembly of 1682, or his violent controversy with Fénelon fifteen years later. At these times especially he experienced the full force of the human

* *Correspondance*, vol. ii, Nos. 257 and 258.

† *Devoirs de la Vie Monastique* (*see* Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 197).

passions that dominated the world in which his lot was cast. He said once that if his life drifted apart from God there was nothing to save him from despair.* There may have been points in his career when such a drifting threatened, and it was then that the fact of La Trappe, and the conviction for which it stood, summoned him back and restored to him the inner vision that had been the inspiration of his youth. This vision of the Unseen which to Rancé was a support in the endurance of each painful day became for Bossuet a goad, driving him into discontent when the interests and satisfactions of his vigorous life waxed too absorbing ; to each it was absolutely essential, and their intimacy was rooted in their common need.

Bossuet showed by the devotional works produced during his years at Meaux that he apprehended the true meaning of the Religious Life, and his ideal of it was not fulfilled by the scholarly routine of the monks of St. Maur ; indeed, when official duties encroached uncomfortably on his own literary labours his regard for them may well have been mingled with a spice of envy. For him La Trappe filled a place apart, and its mission was one which could not in any other way have been fulfilled. In an age of external show and glitter, when the temptations of bodily self-indulgence held dominion over every class, it would seem that the self-annihilation of the Trappist had the same effectiveness as has the stillness of the contemplative in an age of feverish chatter and occupation. The effect produced on others is in no sense to be confounded with the purpose of a consecrated life ; it must be regarded only as a by-product, and must ordinarily remain unknown to the producers, nor is it possible to estimate the value of this species of example as a force among the innumerable influences on human development. Such calculations are outside the scope of finite intelligence. Nevertheless, it may safely be assumed that Bossuet, without suffering in the slightest as controversialist or politician, would have been infinitely poorer as a man, had Armand de

* Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 265.

Rancé retired from the world into reasonable and scholarly seclusion and refrained from his fierce challenge to society.

It was during that autumn visit in 1682 that Bossuet urged upon his friend the advantage that general readers might derive from his treatise on the Monastic Life if it were placed within their reach.* The advice came strangely from one who was the intimate of Mabillon and sought assistance in his historical researches from him and his learned colleagues at St. Germain-des-Prés, for Rancé's work, in its insistence on the entirety of self-abnegation implied by the monastic vow, attacked the practices and intentions of his brethren of St. Maur. Without Bossuet the treatise in all likelihood would not have been published ; it had been written only for the instruction of the Trappists, but he obtained the sanction of Le Tellier and Le Camus, and saw it through the Press. The wisdom of his action is open to question. It was, as Le Camus wrote, necessary, for full appreciation of the book, to be inflamed with the enthusiasm of its writer.† Possibly Bossuet fulfilled that condition when he read it, and did so more completely when he talked it over with the author. For him, evidently, there was enchantment in the violence of the contrast between life as he knew it among fellow priests and courtiers and life as constructed by the great Trappist for the few who had courage to enlist under his leadership. The immediate result of the book, however, was a controversy of no little vehemence between Mabillon and Armand de Rancé, in which Bossuet contrived to intervene without compromising his friendship with either party. The incident is important because it shows his susceptibility to the influence of environment. At La Trappe the pure ideal of renunciation, as exemplified by the silent monks whom he watched at their daily toil, possessed his imagination to the exclusion of those normal sympathies that ruled his life at other times. The weakness of Rancé's

* Dubois : *Hist. de l'Abbé de Rancé.* Vol. ii contains full account of controversy on *La Vie Monastique.*

† Ingold : *Lettres de Cardinal Le Camus*, No. 235.

case was emphasized by the erudition he displayed in maintaining that ignorance was essential to a monk, and it is hard to understand the motive of Bossuet in supporting such obvious inconsistency. No public testimony was asked of him, however, for the contest ended in a meeting between the two champions, where each recognized the noble qualities of the other, and the note of charity dominated. The final incident was one from which Bossuet, as spectator, might have drawn a lesson, for the dissension between them had been hot, and when Mabillon visited La Trappe his adversary had completed a pamphlet that was to refute all the arguments of his last book on the Studies Proper to a Monk. And after the visit the pamphlet was consigned to the archives of the monastery, with a note to the effect that the sincerity and gentleness of the guest had so won the heart of his host that " I should wish never to say a word on any subject that might cause him distress "*—a conclusion that is probably unique in the history of controversy.

The asceticism of the reformer of La Trappe is not for general adoption, he does not represent the true spirit of the Cistercian Order, and his teaching contains many elements of danger. Nevertheless, Bossuet returned to his diocese—after that first visit and on subsequent occasions—inspired and invigorated, and bearing with him an impression of the possibilities of the Religious Life which was of infinite service to him. For there were nine Communities in the diocese of Meaux, and they claimed an important share in the pastoral labours of the bishop. They added appreciably also to his anxieties, for disorder in Religious Life was no less an offence to his instincts as a man of prayer than to his regard for discipline as a bishop.

He had opportunity to observe during his ministry as Archdeacon of Metz the lengths to which conventual disorder could be carried. The Convent of Sainte-Glossinde occupied a considerable area in the centre of

* Broglie, E. de: *Mabillon et la Société de St. Germain-des-Prés*, p. 185.

that city.* It dated from the sixth century and, nominally, was under the Benedictine Rule. Actually the conditions prevailing there during the period when Verneuil was Bishop of Metz set every rule, whether of religion or convention, completely at defiance. If Bossuet in his serious youth had ever watched a carnival procession he would have seen the abbess and her nuns, some of them in male attire, bearing their part in it, and he could not have taken his share in the life of the city without being cognizant of the wild revels held within the convent walls. The ladies of Sainte-Glossinde acknowledged no authority save that of the Sovereign Pontiff, and the dislocation of ecclesiastical affairs in Metz delayed appeal to Rome. Eventually, however, an inquiry was held, over which Bossuet presided, commissioned by the King and by the Pope. This celebrated scandal concerned him for a few weeks only, during which time the offices of counsel, judge, and jury were incorporated in his person. He cross-examined, summed-up, and gave his verdict—and then returned to Paris. Outwardly it made little mark upon his life, but its importance cannot be measured by the time it occupied, and his steady concentration on the ordering of Religious Life within his diocese twenty years later may be traced to this experience of extreme disorder. Not that Meaux produced any example of irregularity that could be compared with Sainte-Glossinde —the worst offenders there with whom he had to deal were the nuns of Jouarre, and their frivolities were not of such a nature as to rouse a public outcry. They were a dishonour to religion in his eyes, however, and he determined to restore the practice of the Rule. In carrying out his purpose he displayed the highest qualities of the administrator : courage, resolution, and unbounded patience. For this reason the venture is important in his history.

In 1225 the Papal Legate had accorded privileges to the convent which may be said to have transformed its

* *See* for full account of Convent of Sainte-Glossinde—Floquet : *Études*, vol. ii, liv. ix.

precincts and the neighbouring hamlets into a miniature bishopric presided over by a female bishop in the person of the abbess.* She had power to appoint and to direct the priests within the limits of her territory, and she herself recognized no authority save that of the Pope. The abbess in possession at the time when Bossuet was appointed to Meaux was Henriette de Lorraine, granddaughter of Henri Duc de Guise, murdered at Blois. Her interpretation of the privileges of her office had induced the King, before Bossuet was in any way concerned, to apply to Rome for investigation of them. The application seems to have been ineffective, and Madame de Lorraine continued to use the revenues of the monastery to maintain the luxury and magnificence appertaining to her rank, while she neglected all the obligations of monastic rule. Her visits to Jouarre were rare, and she made no pretence of regarding it otherwise than as a country-house where rest and refreshment might be obtained when social duties had induced fatigue.

Bossuet, who had seen many women of birth as noble and upbringing as tender embrace the hardness of Carmel or the spiritual austerity of the Visitation with generous desire, was not dazzled by the splendours of the princely house to which Madame Henriette belonged. It was not his policy, however, to attack hastily : his hands were full during his first years at Meaux, and when the difficult question of the lawlessness at Jouarre was once approached he foresaw that it would demand all his attention. It may safely be assumed, also, that he faced the risk of discomfiture before he threw down his challenge, and the risk was by no means small. He had every reason to know the immensity of the advantage possessed by those who commanded family interest over humble persons like himself who had won position by individual effort. The weight of tradition was against him ; indeed, to the ordinary worldling it was an absurdity to expect Madame de Lorraine to submit to an

* *Œuvres*, vol. v, pp. 559–573—"*Pièces concernant l'Abbaye de Jouarre*"—and *Correspondance*, vol. iv, appendix v, for documentary evidence concerning this dispute.

authority from which her Order had been exempt for generations, and there was nothing in her conduct that outraged the susceptibilities of the pious to any serious degree. These stately abbesses, who knew how to heighten their personal attractions by skilful adaptation of the severity of the monastic garb, were familiar figures at Court and had their place in the scheme of society. No doubt the knowledge he had accumulated in his years of service to the Dauphin protected Bossuet from imprudent action, and was the main reason for his long delay in attacking a condition that must have been a source of perpetual offence. The Dauphin's tutor had intimate experience of the power wielded by Madame de Montespan, and so long as that lady reigned supreme his case had no chance of a favourable hearing from the King. For among the notable figures at Court during his years of residence was Gabrielle de Rochechouart, Abbess of Fontevrault,* than whom no one more competent or more autocratic ever directed a great religious Order. Madame de Fontevrault was the youngest and much cherished sister of Madame de Montespan, and one of the chief objects on which she expended her energy and talents was the preservation of just those privileges of authority and independence which Bossuet was determined to destroy. It was necessary, therefore, that he should wait until the star of Madame de Montespan had waned, but while he waited he was working steadily to prepare the Community at Jouarre for the ordeal that awaited them.

This Abbey of Jouarre holds a very important place in the later history of Bossuet, and his first connection with it belongs to the brilliant period of his independent years in Paris. It had been a great compliment to the *bourgeois* abbé when, in 1664, M. le Duc de Luynes had invited him to preach the sermon at the Clothing of his daughter, Madame d'Albert,† but one without promise of far-reaching effect. Yet a time came when he stood in need of friends at Jouarre. Twenty-five years later

* Clement: *Une Abbesse de Fontevrault au XVIII^me^ Siècle.*

† Floquet: *Études*, vol. ii, p. 302.

the authority which he had full right to exercise over the Community was defied, and then he found support of the most valuable kind awaiting him. Henriette d'Albert and her sister, Madame de Luynes, had been educated at Port Royal, and the tendency to independence of judgment characteristic of Port Royal had survived their transplantation to Jouarre. Madame d'Albert treasured the remembrance of the solemn link between herself and Bossuet, and regarded him with the deepest veneration. The two sisters gave their allegiance secretly, and there is nothing to mark the particular point in his negotiations concerning the Community when he began to rely upon their aid. He was the spiritual director of Madame d'Albert, and his rigid views on the way of life involved by the vow of the religious must have prepared them for his condemnation of the practices in vogue at Jouarre. Their adherence was of infinite importance, for they were the nieces of that magnificent lady the Abbess Henriette of Lorraine, and, while their aunt was in Paris or at a health resort, the position they held among their sisters made it possible to prepare the way for those sensational events that loomed in front of the Community.

Bossuet had a good cause and he used all his weapons with infinite skill, but it is probable that he owed the loyalty of many of his supporters within the convent walls more to his own confidence in ultimate success than to any real understanding on their part of his aims and principles. The upheaval necessary for the desired consummation meant that the custom and tradition which were the fabric of their daily lives must fall in ruins, and that they would be dependent on the power that had worked this devastation to repair it. To restless spirits a suggestion of novelty may have been welcome, but it is probable that the true meaning of the reform for which Bossuet was working was understood only by the two whose training at Port Royal had made them subject to cravings for which Jouarre had no provision. It must be admitted, however, that there were other interests involved far wider than those simple ones

touching the nuns and the convent discipline. The Abbess of Jouarre denied the authority of the bishop and only acknowledged that of the Pope ; by so doing she set the whole Gallican theory at defiance, and provided Bossuet with the strongest of all incentives to interference. His attack on the privileges of Jouarre must be accepted, therefore, as proceeding from a double motive, yet there was no need of dissimulation in connection with it. Amid the tangled politics of Church and State he himself retained the directness of thought and purpose that had been characteristic of his youth. Of the many reasons that brought him to a conclusion all may not have been equally admirable, but when the conclusion was reached he went straight forward unhindered by any of the temptations to vacillation or uncertainty that waste the energy of feebler spirits. And as he proceeded some of his greatest qualities were manifest—patience and charity bore as large a part in securing his success as did the inordinate cleverness that made him so formidable an adversary.

It was this cleverness, however—the craft of the lawyer race from which he sprang—which ruled the opening of the combat. He interfered deliberately with the liberties of the Foundation, and lured the Lady Abbess into proceedings against him in a civil court. When she obtained the sentence she desired he appealed at once to the *Parlement* in Paris. He alleged that her exemption from episcopal authority was invalid because it was bestowed without due authority by a Papal Legate, although it had been enjoyed by her predecessors for nearly five hundred years. The importance of a test-case was assigned to the dispute. The long-drawn struggle with Innocent XI had not been calculated to soften the hostile feeling among the Parisian magistrates towards Rome, and their decision was a foregone conclusion. The imperious Abbess had a rude awakening. The defences of her state and dignity, which she regarded as invulnerable, had crumbled at the first assault, the peace between King and Pope which had followed the death of Innocent weakened her chances

of support from Rome, and her pride of race revolted from the unconditional surrender that was demanded of her. Bossuet, who had laid his plans carefully, must have anticipated the continuance of her rebellion : it was for the reform of the Community that he had made his venture, and he accepted the unpopularity resulting from his action as the price of his success.

The decision of the *Parlement* was given in January 1690. A month later, February 25, the Bishop of Meaux entered the little town of Jouarre in state, and the townsfolk lined the way and gave him a respectful welcome. Bossuet never omitted the pomp and circumstance that added dignity to his position in the eyes of a generation habituated to the ceremonies in which their King delighted, and his work at Jouarre was of a kind to be facilitated by external impressiveness. The welcome accorded to the bishop may well have been genuine. The Abbess was unpopular by reason of her disinclination to make any payment for goods supplied for the use of the Community, and her lay subjects were ready to rejoice over her downfall. But the citadel of the little kingdom was the abbey itself, and the leaders of the garrison there were not disposed to surrender to the conqueror. The bishop and his train found the gates locked against them, and when at length the grille slid back it was only to emit a message of defiance.

Bossuet was not prepared for the strength of the resistance that confronted him ; to overcome it and obtain entrance to the monastery he was obliged to appeal to the *Parlement*. When he returned, four days later, the governor and officers of Jouarre accompanied him with a warrant for the forcing of the doors. But it was at cost to his dignity that he resorted to the arm of the law, and every trick and subterfuge that feminine ingenuity could devise continued to impede him in the fulfilment of his purpose. It was here that he showed himself capable of rising above the ordinary weaknesses of human conduct. There is a letter * of his to the prioress (Madame de La Croix, the ringleader of the

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 517.

opposition, who had herself broken faith with him on a matter of importance) which is a masterpiece of wise and temperate remonstrance. He did not hesitate to use his disciplinary powers against the rebels ; he suspended the priests who held office (on one of whom rested a large share of responsibility for the irregular conditions that prevailed), and the nuns who refused to give allegiance to their bishop were denied Communion until they submitted. Yet in this enforcing of authority there was nothing provocative. He upheld the prioress in such matters as did not touch his own relations with her because she was a ruler legitimately appointed, and in a series of letters addressed during the year of struggle to religious within the convent he is unfailing in exhortation to mutual charity, and to the use of every expedient calculated to allay the bitterness of unwilling submission. If he was right in his initial conviction that the privileges of Jouarre were an abuse his conduct throughout the negotiations was wholly laudable. He could have punished the nuns who tricked and defied him, for the King was ready to command their removal to other convents, but he never wavered in his desire to impose order by the kindliest and most conciliatory methods, and in the end he succeeded. The Abbess Henriette withdrew from the contest, and her successor, Anne Marguerite de Rohan, Madame de Soubise, after a brief struggle in which once more the power of class interest was pitted against the personal force of the *bourgeois* bishop, capitulated. Thus the independence of the Community at Jouarre, founded on an ill-considered permission and maintained by a succession of abbesses whose royal descent secured them from attack, was finally destroyed.

Having accomplished his purpose Bossuet devoted infinite care to the regulating of the lives of these noble ladies. Ten years later we find him visiting the abbey and investigating details with the minuteness of one who understands how large a stumbling-block a small disorder may become to the advance of a religious.*

* Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 277.

He admonished them as one with real knowledge of their failure. The nuns of Jouarre had not recovered in ten years from the laxity inherited from so many generations of their predecessors, but the chief danger against which he warned them was the danger familiar to the devout—"his rebuke was specially directed to those who love Divine Office and are satisfied with assiduity in that when their conduct is otherwise unworthy."* Such admonition would be wasted on the indifferent or the self-sufficient, and its utterance implies that under his guidance Jouarre had changed its character. In fact, the tradition of comfortable indolence formerly prevailing there had given place to a real endeavour after spiritual life.

Success of so notable a kind must be held to have justified his interference, but also it strengthened his love of authority. It cannot be denied that as years went on the passion for external dominance gained hold on him increasingly. It was so easy for the assertion of self to appear to be the assertion of a principle, and so hard for one to whose opinion all wise men deferred ever to discover his mistake.

An incident that followed that of Jouarre illustrates the weakness that shadowed the last decade of a great career. Another battle of a like nature for episcopal jurisdiction had been waged against the Benedictine monks of Rebais, and had been won. The bishop once again took possession of the territory that had formerly acknowledged monastic rule, and again, by extending the scope of his own power, upheld the principle of Gallicanism. But he was not content with his victory. The monks had opposed him, and he required of them an outward token of submission. In spite of their protests he insisted on being received with full state and ceremonial and conducted to the altar in their abbey church itself. He was able to rely on support from the King, and it was hard to set a limit on the power of the King in ecclesiastical affairs. Prudence forbade prolonged resistance, and Bossuet, in a letter to Madame d'Albert,†

* Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 282.

† *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1355.

betrays his enjoyment of the triumph he had coveted. Yet no benefit accrued from it to anyone, and to his familiar friends at St. Germain-des-Prés the outrage on monastic dignity was not acceptable. "I think he might have spared the Community such a humiliation," wrote Mabillon, "and I told him so. But he was very eager for it."*

His eagerness for the complete attainment of his purpose never failed him while he lived, and it helped him to support the enormous burden of his life-work. There were occasions, nevertheless, when such eagerness combined with obstinacy to lure him on into actions that are no addition to his glory.

* À Dom Estiennot, 7 avril, 1696 (*Revue Bossuet* (1903), p. 37).

Chapter XVIII. *Bossuet the Historian*

WHEN he entered on the new conditions involved by his appointment to his bishopric Bossuet was already a prominent figure. He had proved his power as a preacher, as a courtier, and as a politician—and in each of these several fields had won celebrity. Yet the real purpose of his life—the purpose that inspired him in his years of insignificance and in each stage of experience until his death—was not fully represented in any of these avocations. Before all else he was a controversialist, and to understand the place in his life that was held by controversy it is necessary to stand beside him and see the world as it appeared to him. For in the intervening centuries the division of Christendom has become stereotyped, while to him it was an innovation, and he refused to allow that any division could be permanent. The Church was the Body of Christ, and the Christian had no life outside the Body, therefore once again the Church must be made synonymous with Christendom : that was his aim, and he never admitted that it was a hopeless one.

It is not easy in following the outward life of Bossuet to realize the degree in which his mind, his thoughts and schemes and desires, were dominated by his Faith. Indeed, in his ambitions and his worldliness and his majestic self-assertion, the individual Jacques Bénigne Bossuet is merged in the champion of the Church : his failings as well as his virtues were interwoven in his relation to that office—it was thus that he saw himself, and it was thus that he imposed himself upon the view of others. Moreover, it was from the standpoint of the champion of the Church that he regarded the work of Martin Luther, and he had been born into the world too late to understand the cause of Luther's domination over the minds of men. The evidence of history would seem to prove that in France there was fervour and enthusiasm awaiting the coming of Reform. The Gallic temperament is peculiarly susceptible to religious reaction, and in the early sixteenth century worship had become formalism ; the lives of the priests were not examples

of good living, and where the religious instinct existed it remained unsatisfied. The sensational challenge of the Reformation kindled the finer spirits to new vitality ; it realized for them a dream which had hazy outline in their brain, and we find the conduct of the first Huguenots touching that high level of purity and strictness to which so many Catholics attained a century later.*

If Bossuet had lived among those first Reformers he must have realized the supernatural force of that great tide which swept over so large a part of Europe. Regarding it in retrospect he had eyes only for the devastation it had wrought, and could find no clue to the mental attitude of those who appeared to rejoice in their own downfall. He was too near to it for critical detachment and too far removed to have known its power by experience. Thus it came to pass that understanding failed him and all his life was spent pursuing a mirage. He believed, with simple and complete sincerity, that reunion might be accomplished on so great a scale that the number of schismatics left in Christian countries would be negligible.

Controversy often becomes confounded with a display of skill in dialectic, and the attack and defence of theologians assumes many of the characteristics of a match between swordsmen fought for the credit of success. But no shallow motive tarnished Bossuet's ardour. "Here is a prelate who never writes for the sake of writing," said Bayle ;† and it says much for the acumen of that critical free-lance that he was able to seize on the distinctive trait in the writings of so prolific a controversialist. In fact, as we follow him closely we find Bossuet, with a fine disregard of the carnage for which religious disagreement had been responsible, more and more concentrated on a protest, that was passionate in its intensity, against the supine negligence of the past generation and the perverse obstinacy of his own, which had

* *See* Antin : *L'Échec de la Réforme en France au XVI*me *Siècle*, p. 231, etc.

† Bayle, P. : *Nouvelles Lettres Critiques* (Amsterdam, 1715), vol. i, p. 72.

permitted the blight of schism to settle upon Christian Europe and had acquiesced in the greatest evil conceivable by the mind of man.

His own mission was to convince his misguided brethren of their errors, and with this object he began his "History of the Variations of the Protestant Religion."* The book was to demonstrate the inconveniences of a system of belief that remained continually fluid and did not recognize authority; it was to be one of the weapons used in a great polemical campaign † organized by the leading thinkers of the day (among whom must be included Antoine Arnauld and other notable Port Royalists). The writing of it was interrupted by a succession of other claims, and with each delay its scope and purpose seem to have been widened, until from a laborious task it was transformed into a cherished occupation for which days or hours were snatched from other toil. It was as his share in the great offensive against the Protestants, and not on his own initiative, that Bossuet undertook his History, but once he had embarked on it he followed a method of his own. The appeal to imagination, which was a leading object to so many of his predecessors,‡ had no part in his scheme; nor did his genius uplift him above detail—every page is studded thickly with references, a custom then almost unknown even to students. And in his hands a subject with infinite capacity for abstract dreariness assumes absorbing interest.§ Himself a thinker, these thinkers of whom he wrote took living form as he mused upon them. They were his adversaries, yet they passed their days in the same endeavour as engrossed his own: their chief desire had been to seize and chain the minds of other men. He describes the battle-

* For learned and luminous study thereon *see* Rébelliau, A.: *Bossuet Historien du Protestantisme* (1891), chief source of the substance of this chapter.

† Rébelliau: *op. cit.*, p. 91, and Picaret: *Les Dernières Années de Turenne*, pp. 225, 226.

‡ *See* especially de Thou and Eudes de Mézerey.

§ *See* Madame de Sévigné: *Lettres*, vol. ix, No. 1181.—"*Ah, le beau livre à mon gré!*" *Cf.* Arnauld, A.: *Lettres*, vol. vi, p. 161.

fields of bygone controversy with vivid touches of which only a fighter would be capable, and the wearisome complications of opinion become subservient to the human interest excited by the combatants. Work like this is not the fruit of study only ; sharp experience, such as falls inevitably to vigorous natures struggling in the world, was needed to produce it. Twenty years spent in Paris and at Court had brought him into intimacy with an immense variety of characters ; he had watched the rivalry of persons and of factions, and tested the uncertain quality of human conduct. For one whose eyes could penetrate beneath the surface, the proceedings of the Clerical Assembly had been full of the raw material of drama. Bossuet said of himself that he could learn from all things and was always learning *—his work upholds his statement. The immensity of his intellectual power delivered him from the feverish doubts, the vain pursuit of an ideal, which haunt the days and nights of the literary craftsman. The knowledge that he had once acquired did not elude him : he could range the fruits of experience and study in the storehouse of his brain, and hold them there ready for use when the occasion came. In his old age, broken by suffering and weakness, the habit of his life was still so strong that, at the mention of any subject he had made his own, he could recall the authorities to be consulted and direct his wondering assistants in their search for the desired passage.† But if with good reason his confidence was greater, his labour was not less than that of other students. In this, also, he turned experience to profit. It was controversy that had claimed his literary skill originally, and controversy had taught him the worth of accuracy. The controversialist is forced to keep before him the recollection of the antagonist who lies in wait to seize on every error, and no practice could be more salutary for an historian than to visualize a learned and malignant critic to whose scrutiny his statements and deductions must be exposed.

Bossuet worked ceaselessly. His bodily health was

* *Œuvres*, vol. xx: *Relation sur la Quiétisme*, section v, par. 8.

† Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 268.

good, his brain never played him false, he could command sleep, and he used this power to secure hours of uninterrupted study ; rising in the night, he could accomplish the task he set himself and go back to bed secure of rest. The lamp in his window was a familiar sight to the citizens of Meaux,* but that city was not a seat of learning, and it is improbable that any of his flock were inspired to emulate his diligence. It was not as a thinker and a writer that they knew him, but as administrator and man of action, and this dual existence explains the necessity of his night watches. When old age threatened to impose idleness upon him he confessed that he was ill-prepared for its endurance because he had always neglected the practice of ordinary recreation.† The prospect facing him may have been tragic, but against the unusual form of improvidence for which he blamed himself he could have set the record of his published work, and so been justified. And yet the writings published in his lifetime were but a fraction of his actual accomplishment. " No man was ever more exempt from the desire to see himself in print "—his secretary declared—" we have heard him say a hundred times that he could not conceive how persons of intelligence could write with the sole object of producing a book."‡

It was in the spirit of this saying that he approached the writing of his History, and in criticism of it this should be kept in mind, for it is plain that his strong sense of literary form was made subservient to the immediate object of his labour. The passion of an historian was allowed scope when it concentrated on the quest of truth, but he was heedless of balance and perspective in so far as the claim for them was that of art. In fact he wrote solely to convince ; his reputation as a writer had no place in his calculations, and if the artist in him is never more evident than in this book it is only because he was, when he wrote it, at the prime of his intellectual power, and genius need not wait upon intention.

* Faugère : *Ecrits Inédits de Saint-Simon*, vol. ii, p. 484.
† Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 266. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

In 1688, when the History appeared, the Jansenists, after a truce of nearly twenty years, were once again the object of popular attack, and consequently were discredited as defenders of the Faith. Catholicism in France, though it had the support of secular authority, was so ill-provided with intellectual champions that Bossuet stood alone. He intended that his book should be unanswerable, and may perhaps have dreamed of it as so revealing of the truth that the fortress of heresy must fall before it.* Certainly his satisfaction in it was independent of any positive result. We find him, four years after its appearance, writing to Leibniz that if the new book on the German Reformation by M. Seckendorf is accurate it must be in agreement with the "History of Variations."† And turning to it again after a further interval of ten years he observed that he had included in it all that there was to say on the Protestant question.‡ The book gains in interest from his comments on it, but it would bear the stamp of his personality even if it had remained anonymous. The preface strikes that note of appeal which was latent in all his earlier controversial writing. "My chief fear,"§ he says quaintly, "is to make the futility of their reform too clear to our brothers. There are some among them who will be roused to fury rather than to reflection by so clear a demonstration of their errors; although in very truth I do not regard them as responsible for the condition into which they were born, and my commiseration is far greater than my blame. And how many of them will tell me that I have thrown away my character for moderation by confusing religious dispute and personal attack! But assuredly they will be wrong. If it comes to pass that through this record of it Reform should become hateful, men of goodwill must own that that result is due to facts speaking for themselves, and

* Gibbon, the historian, attributes his conversion to Roman Catholicism to this work and the *Exposition*. *See* his *Miscellaneous Works* (1837), pp. 28, 29.

† *Correspondance*, vol. v, No. 680.

‡ Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. i, p. 213. § *Œuvres*, vol. xiv, p. 14.

not to me. And if they should discover that the actual conduct of those founders—who are held up to us as marvellous beings sent into the world in the sixteenth century to recreate Christianity—was in direct contradiction to their profession, the Protestants will learn from this passage of history not to dishonour God by attributing to Him a choice of agents which was so evidently ill-judged. All their disputes, their contradictions, and their falsehoods bear witness to the Catholic Faith. From behind all the contentions and complications of this new Reform, Catholic truth will break forth as the sun pierces a bank of cloud, and this treatise, if I can carry it out as God suggests it to me, will prove the justice of our cause."

With this preamble Bossuet flung himself upon his subject. The figure of Luther loomed largest before his mental vision, and the place assigned to Luther is out of all proportion to that allotted to any of his partners in revolt. And the book is the worse for the writer's self-indulgence in this matter. No other character in history can have engrossed his attention in like degree, and the astonishment which it evoked in him was inexhaustible. Of the sixteen chapters of the History six are chiefly devoted to Luther, and he makes continual appearance in many of the others, yet there were many obstacles, besides religious antagonism, to any true understanding of him by Bossuet. Most evident among them was the great scholar's ignorance of all modern languages except his own. By this he was denied access to the familiar correspondence which is the source of so much precious information to a biographer, and also to any contemporary work concerning the leader of Reform, for at that date nothing on the subject had appeared in French.* It was very well for him to declare that he used no material which could be called in question by those whom he was seeking to convince ; in fact omissions are hardly less deceptive than misstatements, and his knowledge of his subject cannot be regarded as comprehensive.

* *See* Rébelliau : *op. cit.*, p. 420.

Behind the ignorance of language, moreover, lay a far more serious hindrance to understanding. Luther was essentially a German, stamped with the fine, and also with some of the ugly, qualities characteristic of his race. Bossuet, French in every fibre yet striving to be fair, appreciates his strength, his pertinacity, his power as a leader, even his effort after honesty, but is puzzled and revolted by his fierce love of tyranny, his violence and coarseness. The mysterious fascination which this one personality held for him disturbed his sense of proportion, to the detriment of his book as literature but to its advantage as a human document. Certainly the History was not designed as a medium for spiritual self-revelation, yet if, in reading it, we have in view another work of his containing intimate self-expression, the Commentary on St. John's Epistle—known as *Le Traité de la Concupiscence*—his remarkable concentration on the character of Luther becomes more intelligible. In his opinion Luther had wrought more evil in the world than any other individual human being, and yet the inalienable justice of his judgment compelled him to acknowledge that Luther himself was not an incarnation of evil, and that his moral qualities had borne their share in his achievement of success. And when, as he wrote his meditation on the warning of St. John, he sought examples of captives of "the pride of life" it is permissible to guess that the two most prominent in his mind were Luther and himself. He traced the gradual deterioration of the great Reformer, and saw in it the miserable results of that temptation which he knew to be his own.

In his Treatise he denounces self-indulgence and all sensual vices forcibly enough, but it is plain when he passes on to the other dominion of self-love that in the earlier passages he is merely theorizing ; it is not with the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes that he is seriously concerned—he is moved only by his consideration of "the pride of life." When that point is reached all the accumulated discoveries of those hours of solitude and leisure wherein he had faced himself surged up within his brain, and he set forth the naked truth he

knew. His verdict upon Luther was that he had made himself the slave of pride : " the pride that becomes self-worship and claims universal homage "*—the pride of Lucifer ; but he acknowledged that Luther had begun with the sincere profession of a real humility not less convincing than that which fell so frequently from his own lips. This concession was disquieting, but it sharpened his interest with regard to Luther and sent him back to his dissection of the sin of spiritual pride as to a subject that had intimate and personal importance. That humility itself may minister to pride and a man be vain of being humble † is one of the subtleties of self-knowledge which the world regards as puerile ; but Bossuet, probing for the root of the disease, is forgetful of any man's opinion ; with the fate of Luther engrossing his imagination he is relentless in bringing into light the smallest symptom that may serve as warning to those who may be stricken with the malady. The temptations that beset the virtuous, the intellectual, the souls whose lives are dedicated to the service of God and of their fellow men—it is these which he groups together as " the pride of life," it is before these that in his hours of reflection he himself trembled, and it is to these that he attributed the downward course of Luther which his " History of Protestantism " traces with such elaboration.

It is not to Luther only, however, that he devotes attention. Scattered throughout the book are vivid scenes that seem to show us for an instant the world of the sixteenth century, grim, grotesque, and sometimes infinitely humorous. Melancthon, Calvin, Erasmus, and a host of others take momentary reality as Bossuet, after years of mental association with them, throws them upon his canvas. The gulf of time he had to bridge was not a wide one, but for him, the bias of his mind being so opposed to the mentality of the first generation of Protestants and of those who regarded them with toleration, it was a greater feat to place himself beside

* *Œuvres*, vol. vii : *De la Concupiscence*, ch. xvi.

† *Ibid.*, ch. xxii and xxiii.

them and grasp the significance of their thoughts and deeds, than it would be for a twentieth century historian. The sense of antagonism dwindled when the Protestants in question were Protestants by inheritance ; many of these commanded his respect, and he desired to win them rather than to force them back into agreement. With this end in view he had striven to understand their reasoning, and his book was enriched by that generous endeavour. His confidence that a vivid picture of the difficulties and inconsistencies inseparable from heresy would win back multitudes to the safety of the Faith was not justified, however. The effect of his book did not accord with his design ; nevertheless it was infinitely effective, for it revealed the Protestants to themselves in an aspect which they had not realized,* and from the revelation they evolved a solution of many doubts and inconveniences that had long troubled them. He had demonstrated that this vast new society, which divided Europe and reduced to chaos the most time-honoured political traditions, was itself devoid of any settled system ; that it was swayed this way and that by the contests of its leaders and was completely lacking in any foundations that gave promise of stability. He did not expect his opponents to accept his thesis without protest, and in fact it provoked a storm of contradiction and counter-attack. When that had subsided the preachers of Reform began to modify their claim to fixity of doctrine, and to embrace the view that their mission was a search for truth whose developments were likely to involve a further series of just such variations as those that Bossuet condemned.†

We have seen that he was satisfied with his work, that he judged it to fulfil his intention for it, and to be, in fact, " the last word on the Protestant controversy," and he did not concern himself with its bearing on his literary reputation. In the present day, however, it is to the literary critic that the book is of such vivid interest, for it demonstrates the intrepidity of the

* Rébelliau : *op. cit.*, p. 576.

† *Cf.* Bayle : *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 75.

writer's genius. He was treating a vast and complicated subject, and many employments occupied and interrupted him, but he was never content to accept tradition ; he made his own discoveries and formed his own conclusions. His study of Melancthon,* for instance, is intricate, and when, after close attention, his real verdict on that tragic figure has been disentangled, it is not in accord with the prevalent opinion of his day, and won corroboration only from later generations. Again, he devoted as much research to his survey of the early revolt of the Albigenses and of the Waldensians † as though these had been his central theme, and the result is so full of unfamiliar names, and of allusions to so many by-ways of heresy, that it is not easy reading. But having plunged into an abstruse and complicated subject it is characteristic of Bossuet that he should go further in his search for knowledge than any other explorer. Catholic and Protestant alike accepted that the belief of Albigenses and Waldensians was almost identical. Bossuet insisted on the wide divergence between them. He failed to convince his contemporaries, but after a lapse of two centuries his conclusions have been endorsed by competent historians.

These instances suffice to show that his deliberate excursion into the domain of history was an important event in his life. Neither in the books written for the Dauphin nor in his controversial work had there been full scope for his powers. When he allowed himself to develop the scheme of his " History of Protestantism " it was with no intention of providing an outlet for self-expression, yet the genius of the historian was latent within him, and if the exercise of unbending resolution had resulted in its permanent repression, not only would his powers have missed their full fruition, but the world would have been poorer by a masterpiece. Probably such a thwarting of intellectual instinct was not possible. We have seen that outward events were by no means propitious for a work of research. Between 1681 and 1688, in addition to external activities in many directions,

* Book v. † Book xi.

Bossuet's literary production was considerable ;* he published the two volumes concerning his Conference with Claude, also his celebrated Catechism written for his diocese, and his Treatise on Communion in both kinds. Four of his *Oraisons Funèbres*, with all that they entailed of labour, came within these dates, and until 1685 he was engaged on his "Defence of the Declaration."

It is obvious that the insistence of an overmastering impulse was needed to produce a great work of discovery founded on research against such a throng of hindrances, and there are some indications that Bossuet's regard for his History was of a different order from that with which any of his other productions had inspired him. Ordinarily when one piece of work was accomplished he seems to have passed on swiftly to the next, sparing no time for backward glances. But he had convinced himself that if any reason was left among Protestants they must acknowledge themselves vanquished after so clear an exposure of their errors, and he awaited their capitulation eagerly. In fact, the Minister Jurieu, most truculent of pamphleteers, took up the cudgels, and a battle, destined to become violently personal on both sides, began. It raged for three years, and, if it did not advance the prospect of ultimate reunion, it gave opportunity to Bossuet to repair any omissions that revealed themselves in his original work after it had left his hands.† By the end of that period other interests had absorbed him and he figured no more as an historian.

* *See* Appendix v.

† *See* Crouslé : *Bossuet et le Protestantisme*, p. 143.

Chapter XIX. *The Tolerance of Bossuet*

IT was in 1688 that the great history made its appearance, and by that date the last semblance of religious toleration in France had ceased. In October 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and set the final seal on a long course of persecutions.* At the beginning of that year a petition of protest, drawn up by the Minister Claude, had been forwarded to Versailles setting forth the injustice under which the Huguenots were suffering. The methods in vogue for dealing with heresy were extremely simple. The door to reconciliation with the Church at all times and in all places was held open, and here and there a priest devoted his eloquence and learning to the allurement of the stubborn and the persuasion of the wavering. This was the aspect of the Huguenot situation on which the charitable could dwell contentedly. There was, however, a further detail that was not pressed upon the public notice. The provision for the royal armies was a severe tax upon the revenue, and the Minister of War received authority to quarter his troops upon those subjects of his Most Catholic Majesty who were not Catholics. No penalty exacted by the law had greater horror than the ordeal to which the Huguenot households were exposed,† and the appearance of Louvois' soldiery had been known to convert the entire population of a Protestant town. The statistics of conversion were calculated to give great satisfaction to the faithful, but to Claude,‡ and to those who shared his inalienable conviction, the most savage form of open persecution was preferable to the infamy of this counterfeit of toleration. And within a few months of his protest the pretence of toleration ceased.

The new ordinance was described by Bossuet as "the pious edict which was to give the death-blow to heresy." § In fact, it suppressed all schools and places of worship used by the Reformers, exiled all ministers who

* *See* Limiers: *Hist. du Règne de Louis XIV*, vol. v, liv. ix.

† *See* Douen: *La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes*, intro.

‡ His protest *Sur les Lettres Circulaires de l'Assemblée*, etc. (1683), convicts the bishops of hypocrisy.

§ *Oraisons Funèbres: Michel Le Tellier.*

persisted in their errors, provided for the baptism of all children by Catholic priests, and forbade Huguenots—on pain of condemnation to the galleys—to attempt to leave the country. The rejoicings of Bossuet over the Revocation Edict are not consistent with other expressions of his opinion, yet his real abhorrence of heresy must be remembered. The promulgation of the Edict was followed, as it had been preceded, by persecution, and he was the enemy of all violence, but the Protestant system of worship appeared to him as evil in itself and a fruitful source of evil, and he had no regret at its prohibition. Moreover, his confidence in the real advantage accruing to those who renounced their errors and embraced the true Faith was so great that it was easy, in a moment of enthusiasm, to banish reflection on the hollowness of compulsory conversion. It was absolutely necessary that France should be cleansed from the taint that had sullied her for more than a century. Protestantism was at the root of most evils ; " it was synonymous with the rejection of all authority in Church and State, of all social order, even of morality. It meant that man with all his unbridled impulses put himself in the place of God."* Such was his description of opinions with which he did not agree, and it would have been echoed by many of the worthiest and most charitable of his contemporaries. The age in which he lived was one that had no sympathy for the spirit of tolerance, and Bossuet was not likely to become imbued with a sentiment that would have cancelled the chief incentive to his controversial labours. In principle, then, it must be conceded that he approved the policy which appears so criminal to modern judgment, while in practice he was reluctant to enforce it.

Once, when his conduct towards the Quietist offenders was called in question, he wrote of himself : " I am always what I have always been, as tender over individuals as I am severe over doctrine."† That phrase is the keynote of his conduct towards the Huguenots.

* *Œuvres*, vol. xv : *Cinquième Avertissement contre Jurieu.*

† *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1557.

Their opinions roused him to the fiercest denunciation ; when suffering threatened them as individuals, however, he remembered that they were men and women. There is conclusive evidence of his compassionate regard for them, of his endeavours, as persevering as they were futile, to enter into their opinions and reason with them without prejudice. One of the Huguenot ministers, writing to Huet after the publication of the " Universal History," observed that its author was well known for his moderation and recognized as a man of good feeling, as well as a wise man.* In days of fierce sectarian animosity that is a significant tribute from an adversary. The condition of the Huguenots in the diocese of Meaux may fairly be regarded as a little less grievous than that of their co-religionists elsewhere. Cosnac, Bishop of Valence, notes in his diary that the methods of the dragoons were far more efficacious in hastening conversion than any arguments of his ; that when two hundred Huguenots had been burned in a barn where they were assembled for their illegal form of worship the remainder became amenable to Catholic influence.† Grim anecdotes of a like nature abound in the records of those days, but in Meaux there was a reasonable attempt to temper injustice with mercy.‡ The town itself had been one of the nurseries of Calvinism and Lizy, within the diocese, was the scene of the last National Protestant Synod held in France.§ If Bossuet had left the law to take its course, and accepted the numerical result of the work of the King's officers in the matter of conversion, he would have incurred no blame and saved much time and energy for other purposes. Questions of faith lay far too near his heart, however, for such a course to be acceptable ; he might regard religious division as a danger to the State, but the ardour of his desire to reconcile Protestants with the Church sprang from the love of souls.

* See *Revue Bossuet* (January 1901).

† Cosnac : *Mémoires*, vol. ii, p. 116.

‡ The difficulties of the problem as Bossuet saw it are indicated in his Report of 1698. *See* Lemoine : *Mémoires des Évêques de France*, p. 15.

§ Druon : *Bossuet à Meaux*, p. 76.

"It is for us to distribute the merciful gifts of God; we are not agents of His vengeance. We must use infinite caution, and the harshness that may be employed in the King's name is only an additional reason that we should be invariable in gentleness"—this was the bishop's charge to his clergy at the Synod after the Edict of Revocation,* and he recommended that there should be no insistence on non-essentials, such as the use of holy water or of the *pain bénit*. A further warning is concerned with the risks attendant on over-hasty conversion. These soon caused him grave disquiet.† The law of the Church compelled every Catholic to receive the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar every year, and the law of the State required that every subject should be a Catholic. No honest mind could doubt that sacrilege must spring from the conjunction of the two decrees.

Bossuet was an acknowledged master in controversy, but it may be questioned whether his past experience was of much assistance in the task that these new conditions laid upon him. There is clear evidence that he tried to win the people by kindliness; he surprised an unlawful gathering of Protestants on one occasion, but he used the opportunity for persuasion rather than for rebuke. He visited them in their own homes and showed himself to be their friend when they needed practical advice. He held conferences, and was ready to reason and plead with all who came,‡ and he exerted his eloquence in the pulpit of his cathedral that he might win the hearts and minds of all his people. One of his auditors tells how he would preach for over an hour to a packed congregation numbering four thousand —"truly he did not spare himself in the service of these people." He told them the meaning of ordinary practices and their antiquity, and also of the love of God,

* Réaume: *Vie de Bossuet*, vol. ii, p. 275; and *Revue Bossuet* (October 1904).

† His later opinion on results of coercion are given in letter to P. de La Broue, June 1698. *Correspondance*, vol. ix, No. 1712.

‡ Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 188.

and of the interior life of which these outward practices were the symbols : " His preaching was so easy that we could have listened all day without growing weary."*

His methods were not regarded favourably by those who enforced the King's decree. " Nothing can be done in the diocese of Meaux ; the weakness of the bishop is a hindrance to conversion "†—such was the verdict of the Intendant at Soissons, and it is supported by the bishop's secretary, Ledieu, the most intimate of eye-witnesses. " There were some who returned to the Church of their own free will, but by far the greater number remained obdurate."‡

If Bossuet was conscious of the discontent his clemency provoked it did not move him. His Pastoral in 1686 was addressed chiefly to the Protestants and the newly-converted among his flock, and he was able to declare that not one among them could complain of ill-treatment either to his person or to his goods.§ At that time he was still confident that the fulfilment of his hopes could not be long delayed and real peace and unity on religious questions would prevail throughout his diocese. He recognized that conversion was more thorough when it developed slowly, and was content to wait until the wavering had laid their doubts to rest. Those who came to make submission were welcomed tenderly. A description of one of his days at Meaux shows the degree to which he made himself accessible despite the many claims upon his time. " In the morning there came a nobleman, dwelling in Saintonge, who abjured his Protestant errors in the chapel and remained to dine. In the afternoon certain peasants appeared at the palace door and asked to see the bishop. ' We have no longer any doubts '—they told him—' we are sure that it is

* *Recueil de Sieur Rochard, Chirurgien du Roi dans la ville de Meaux* (Réaume) : *op. cit.*, vol. ii, appendix 8.

† Quoted Gazier : *Louis XIV et Bossuet*, p. 110.

‡ *Mémoires*, p. 191.

§ A statement challenged in pamphlets by Basnage and by Bishop Burnet.

better to be Catholic, and we wish you to convert us. But we will not obey the Pope.' To which Bossuet replied : 'The King himself obeys him. And I obey him.' And with that they were satisfied and abjured their errors."* The sketch, so roughly outlined, is characteristic of Bossuet. When the occasion called for it he assumed, very readily, all the dignity that his ecclesiastical position warranted, but he could meet the simple with simplicity. A smaller man, if he had condescended to speak at all with labouring folk, would have met their repudiation of the Pope with pained surprise and administered a suitable rebuke. Bossuet had made it his endeavour to smooth the way of return for every type of wanderer—the ignorant as well as the intellectual—and he gave them the answer that made submission easy.

There was another side to the picture, however. Time passed, and it became clear that those who were Huguenot at heart were not changed in nature by being Catholic in name. The King's officers did not consult the bishop before using their authority. There was a painful scene when a certain couple of gentle birth, Seguier la Charmoix and his wife, were brought to the episcopal palace that wise persuasion might turn them from their errors. The wife, who had been removed from her home to a religious Community in the town till she should be converted, screamed continuously ; the husband, who resented their separation, was more ready to urge his own complaints than to listen to theological argument, and between the two the time and patience of their host were wasted.

And there was wider testimony yet to the existence of this spirit of rebellion. The Huguenots, among whom the newly-converted were probably included, assembled at Nanteuil. They were surprised by a company of dragoons and a large number of them arrested and condemned to death. This was in 1688, more than two years after the Edict of Revocation, and it was calamitous that the incident should have taken

* *Sieur Rochard : op. cit.*

place within the diocese of Meaux. The opponents of Bossuet pointed to the offence as proof of the failure of that policy of mercy which he advocated, while the punishment of the offenders was an official repudiation of the policy itself. Directly the tidings reached him he hastened to Versailles, and the news of his successful intercession with the King was speedily made known throughout the diocese. His errand of mercy is commemorated in many records of his personal dealings with the Protestants as if its result had been completely happy. "Nevertheless"—says the contemporary chronicle—"they were condemned—some to the galleys, some to perpetual imprisonment, and some to be branded with the *fleur-de-lis*."* The postscript is noteworthy as showing the strict limit on his influence in checking persecution.

In fact the mental position of Bossuet was at variance with every principle of consistency, and the Intendant who charged him with weakness did him no wrong. He was the intimate friend of the Chancellor Le Tellier, who had drawn up the Revocation Edict, and he was consulted by the King in all that concerned the Church; this must convict him of conniving at the plan for the forcible repression of heresy besides acclaiming it when it took the form of a decree. Nor can there be any doubt of his theoretical agreement with the King and the Court and the *Parlement* that the existence of a heretic was an offence to the Church and a danger to the State. The logical sequence to that theory was the extermination of the heretic. The rest of the Catholic world accepted this conclusion cheerfully, and were undismayed by the grisly tidings of events in Huguenot districts that sometimes reached the capital. But with Bossuet the case was different. The capacity for self-deception, the penalty of his artist nature, helped him to see a potential Catholic in every Huguenot. He believed that they were led astray by false guides and their prejudices were founded on misrepresentation. On that premiss the banishment of their pastors and the ruin

* *Sieur Rochard: op. cit.*

of their conventicles became such an act of mercy as might be the closing of a poisoned well.*

Thus he allowed his vision of reunion to divert his gaze from actualities. The same instinct which had guided his pen when he wrote his statement of the Catholic Faith twenty years earlier prompted him to contravene the King's orders for the suppression of heresy. In the one case he had persuaded himself that the King's real intention toward his subjects was merciful, and therefore he obstructed the cruelties ensuing on a cruel law. In the other he was equally persuaded that there was nothing in the teaching of the Catholic Church that could be unacceptable to honest minds, and, seen in that light, the softening of such points as might offend became a charitable expedient to win the prejudiced. He was completely true to himself and his own vision, and if he had carried public opinion with him his policy might have furthered the purpose that absorbed him. He was alone in it, however, and in a generation dominated by the fiercest sectarianism a time came when his simplicity provoked distrust. The Protestants were suspicious of a trap when the door was thrown so widely open, and in England, where the protest against Rome had assumed a character wholly different from that of the Calvinists and Lutherans, he was regarded as a very dangerous enemy.

The *Exposition* had been translated into English † in 1672 and circulated widely. Court influence swayed towards Rome, and the little volume was peculiarly adapted for cases where there was no fierce prejudice to be overcome. It is said to have produced a large number of conversions, and there is abundant evidence of the fierce antagonism towards Bossuet himself that it aroused among Anglican divines. It is to be regretted that Bossuet was debarred, by his ignorance of the

* Bossuet did not escape the charge of hypocrisy as well as cruelty. Frotté is particularly violent in accusation. See *Some particular motives of the Conversion of P. F.* (1691), and Spanheim : *Relation de la Cour de France*, p. 449.

† By Walter Montagu, son of the first Earl of Manchester.

English language, from any real comprehension of English thought. He had several English correspondents, and was held responsible for the conversion to the Roman Faith of two Scottish noblemen—Lord Perth * and Lord Lovat. These were all, however, adherents of James II, and their conversation was not likely to correct his prejudices regarding English politics. He was profoundly interested in the English people, but his ignorance of them was invincible, and his intercourse with those of them who differed from him in opinion was embittered at the outset by a misunderstanding. His relation with the little band of eager Churchmen who upheld the Faith in England in those dangerous times might otherwise have been characterized by the same friendliness as had distinguished his intercourse with Paul Ferry. This condition was rendered impossible by an accusation of double-dealing levelled at the *Exposition* by William Wake, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.† The charge, although inaccurate, was not unfounded. It was the disposition to temporize which laid him open to it. We have seen that even as he refused to face the inevitable result of a law to compel conversion so had he striven to veil the real divergence between the faith of Catholic and Protestant. In his great longing for reunion he was persuaded that if he could allay the fears and prejudices prevailing among the great mass of heretics—the hideous and terrible form in which the ministers were wont to represent Popery in the pulpits ‡—and so draw them within the fold, the Grace of God and the glory of the Faith itself would complete the work that he had been permitted to begin. Even in its accepted form it was questionable whether his *Exposition* gave a true and comprehensive statement of the doctrine of the Church,§ Catholic and

* *Correspondance*, letters 359, 487, 490, 907, 1291, 1304, 1410, 1485, 1952. Bossuet had an interview with Lord Lovat at the suggestion of Mabillon. See *Revue Bossuet* (July 1904).

† *See* Preface *Exposition of Doctrine of the Church of England* (1686); also, same year, *Defence of Doctrine*, etc.

‡ *Œuvres*, vol. xiii, p. 16.

§ See *Protest of Abbé Imbert*, quoted by Wake; *Defence*, etc., p. 121.

Roman, but in his early notes of it the points that he knew to be of special difficulty to Protestants were omitted or unduly softened. This early manuscript* was circulated, and eventually printed, without the knowledge of its author. It differed materially from the authorized version, and the discovery of its existence was hailed with special delight by the Anglicans. The original pamphlet had been, according to the Reformers, the statement of the Faith which Bossuet had intended to present to the world, and its publication was stopped by authority because "the too great desire of palliating had absolutely perverted the doctrine of their Church."† As one of his great arguments against Reform was the variable nature of the Faith that it produced, as opposed to the fixity of that of Rome, it was possible to make considerable capital out of the divergencies between his several statements of Catholic dogma.

Wake used his material adroitly, and refused to accept Bossuet's contradiction regarding the printing of his early notes (polemical offensiveness in those days was carried to a point which now appears incredible), and he struck just at the moment when the persecution of the Huguenots in France complicated the question in its spiritual and intellectual aspect. He was a more dangerous adversary than he appeared in the eyes of the great Frenchman. In that year, 1686, the "History of Protestant Variations" was very near completion, and its author's view of the Anglican Church (based on Bishop Burnet's "History of the Reformation") is set forth therein with great distinctness. In his eyes, indeed, the Anglican Church was not a Church at all, nor did he differentiate between the English Reformers and the great mass of Calvinists and Lutherans. In his *Oraison Funèbre* for Queen Henriette the moral condition of her former subjects is painted in lurid colours, and, ever after their betrayal by Henry VIII, he appears to regard them as the prey of licence and impiety. A year later, before the mourning Court at St. Denis, his capacity

* Known as *L'Édition des Amis*. See *Œuvres*, vol. xiii, pp. iv, v, 30.

† Wake: *Exposition of Doctrine*, etc.

for magnificent exaggeration reached its zenith when he declared that the Almighty had decreed the English Revolution in order that Henrietta of England might be restored to the Church. "The law of the State was the obstacle to her salvation; therefore, God overthrew the State that she might be delivered from its law."*

These oratorical extravagances sprang from a root of prejudice, and by refusing to recognize the essential difference between the faith of a Churchman in England and of a Reformer on the Continent he forfeited his chance of influence on English thought. When Wake drew up a statement of the Anglican doctrine in a form identical with the *Exposition* Bossuet regarded it as a parody rather than as a profession of faith, and remained indifferent as to the impression he produced among learned Anglicans. Many of his English adversaries had the advantage of familiarity with the French language and with the manners and thought prevailing in French society, while he contentedly ignored both the principle and the purpose that inspired their conduct.† His acquaintance with a translation of Burnet's work, unbalanced by other testimony, was hardly calculated to enlighten him, and the attacks of Wake (regarded as a young Protestant chaplain who had appeared in Paris in 1682 in attendance on the British envoy) seemed to him altogether negligible. Therefore, while a storm of fierce vituperation between his critics and his champions was raging across the Channel, he remained undisturbed: "It has been the constant habit of Monseigneur de Meaux, having once written, to leave his tracts to the world and take no care to defend them. Perhaps he looks upon his pieces to be of a spirit and force sufficient to despise whatever attempts can be made upon them." Such was the comment of Wake, and there is reason to think that it was justified.

It was Burnet whom Bossuet chose to regard as the

* *Œuvres*, vol. xii. Nevertheless, his references to the Papal policy towards England in the sixteenth century (*Défense de la Déclaration*, liv. iv, ch. xxiii) might be used to justify the Reformation.

† Lambin, G.: *Les Rapports de Bossuet avec l'Angleterre*, 1672–1704.

representative of the fabulous Church in England ;* in him he was able to recognize the Protestant spirit with which he was familiar, and he assigned a place in the front rank of his adversaries, between Jurieu and Basnage, to the famous Whig ecclesiastic. Yet, despite his ignorance, England retained a special hold on his imagination. He told the exile, James II, that the love of old traditions shown by the English people attracted him, and he was able to maintain an unbroken friendship with that most faithful of English Churchmen, Robert Nelson. It seems, however, as if Nelson must have avoided theological argument. In his years as a non-juror with a Papist wife to whom he was deeply attached he may have feared the persuasive eloquence of Bossuet. He contented himself with despatching specimens of Anglican theology to Meaux, the last of these being a pamphlet on the Catholic Church † by his friend Bull, afterwards Bishop of St. David's. Bossuet, in a letter of acknowledgment written from St. Germain-en-Laye, where the Assembly of Clergy of 1700 was in progress, desired to convey to Dr. Bull, besides his own gratitude, " the unfeigned congratulations of all the Clergy of France assembled in this place for the service he does the Catholic Church." Had the letter ended on this generous note it might have healed old wounds and left a kindly memory of the writer among the circle of Nelson's intimates—the Tory clergy who had taken umbrage at the *Exposition*. But the temptation to give the challenge that was so obvious a sequel to the compliment proved irresistible. " There is one thing I wonder at, which is that so great a man, who speaks so advantageously of the Church, of salvation which is obtained only in unity with her, can continue a moment without acknowledging her. Will he not vouchsafe to tell me, who am a zealous defender of the doctrine he teaches, what is it that he means by the Catholic Church ? "‡

* In 1685 he gave momentary consideration to validity of English Orders. *See* letter to Mabillon. *Correspondance*, vol. iii, No. 339.

† *Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*, etc.

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. xii, No. 2020.

Voluminous replies greeted this query. It is improbable that Bossuet realized the indignation he would arouse, and his ignorance is very properly attributed "to your lordship's unacquaintedness with our writings."* But this "unacquaintedness" was in itself an offence. It implied that this great theologian, known throughout Europe, had never considered the opinions of English Churchmen as worthy of attention. Robert Nelson hoped that the moment had come for the omission to be rectified, and in his "Life of Bull" he expressed regret "that the death of Bossuet prevented the progress of that Controversy which we might have expected to have seen carried on with great Decency and to very good Effect."†

His regret is not justified by reasonable probability. The controversy could not have been elucidated by the arguments and definitions of Bossuet or of Bull, and the sum of mutual bitterness between devout and earnest men would have been increased. It was not in intellectual apprehension that Bossuet failed. He could by study and inquiry have made himself as familiar with the tenets of the Anglican as he was with the opinions of the Huguenots of Meaux, but he chose to class all who differed from himself together in one immense company of the misguided. It was only as possible converts that they had interest for him, because, without conversion, he did not recognize any foothold that he and they could have in common. In his diocese, and in his vast dealings beyond its limits, he was liable to rude shocks and disappointments for which the limitation of his outlook in this direction was responsible. The same unconquerable optimism that had shown him a student and a scholar in the Dauphin and a man of honour in the King, taught him to regard the forced profession of the Huguenot as the first step towards

* Quoted G. Hickes: *Several Letters to a Popish Priest* (1705), p. 322.

† Nelson, R.: *Life of Dr. Bull*, p. 390. (That the misconception of the Faith of Anglicans was not peculiar to Bossuet is suggested by the statement that Nelson "*se joignit aux Catholiques*" in *Revue Bossuet* (1903), p. 138.)

joyous acceptance of the Catholic Faith, and to find in the enigma of the Anglican, with his deep learning and his passionate convictions, a sign that the English people were under an aberration that was only temporary. In this his reason yielded to his charitable instinct ; he desired a sense of brotherhood with all men, but a heretic could have no place in the Christian family as he conceived it.

Chapter XX. *Quietism at Court*

IT is a natural instinct in the champions of great causes to desire disciples, and Bossuet, although he took no direct measures to enlist the sympathy and admiration of a generation younger than his own, recognized the value of a follower whose natural gifts marked him for future leadership. If he ever paused to consider the isolation of his own position the great controversialist must have longed for some assurance that, when the time came for him to put off his mantle, it would descend on one with strength to bear its weight.

The remarkable capacities of François de Fénelon which, during his years of training, had distinguished him among his contemporaries at the Seminary of St. Sulpice, secured for him the interest and regard of Bossuet. The intimacy into which their acquaintanceship ripened has become historic by reason of its tragic sequel. In the long-past years before Bossuet achieved celebrity, he had preached many sermons in the refuge for recent converts in the Rue St. Anne, known as the " Nouvelles Catholiques," and at all times afterwards he maintained close relations with it and with its work. In 1678 Fénelon was appointed Superior of this celebrated institution, and as, year by year, events moved towards the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, his office gained in importance. From his first installation he was known to Bossuet,* and when the Dauphin's tutor became Bishop of Meaux the friendship between the two was so well established that the change of outward circumstances did not disturb it. The privilege of familiar intercourse with Bossuet was not accorded to very many persons. His constant preoccupation with work of divers kinds gave an impression of inaccessibility, and he was in fact so concentrated upon each task in turn that the need of companionship did not present itself. He had neither the aptitude nor the inclination for society that distinguished Fénelon. As he expressed it in a letter from Paris to Henriette d'Albert : " I am very irregular in paying visits, or rather I am regular in not paying them.

* His name is on the list of those who formed the Little Council.

I am forgiven because it is so evident that my motive is neither self-esteem nor superiority nor indifference ; and I am spared immeasurable loss in time."* In the company of Rancé or of Mabillon he could enjoy the exchange of thought implied by intellectual intimacy, but such indulgence was exceptional in his life of persistent labour. He may have been more susceptible to the charm of Fénelon's society because of this habitual isolation ; certainly the young abbé and his friend and constant companion, Langeron, were frequent guests at the bishop's table at his house in the Place Royale,† and were associated with his work in the earlier years of his residence at Meaux.

The Chronicle of Sieur Rochard records that a priest "called M. de la Motte Fénelon" gave an address every Sunday in the cathedral at five, after evening prayers had been said.‡ This was in the Lent of 1684, and Bossuet was always present. We may learn the opinion that he formed of his guest's capacities from the fact that he enlisted his services as a mission preacher in the year following, when he made his Visitation.§ Fénelon was about thirty at this time, and his friend the Abbé de Langeron rather younger. Bossuet was ready to accept them as inseparables, and to appreciate the contrasting qualities which made one the complement of the other. The enemies of Fénelon have represented him as cultivating Bossuet from interested motives. The Bishop of Meaux had won a position from which he might stretch out a helping hand to a younger man who was known to be his intimate, and therefore this younger man pursued him with flattery of the most fulsome kind and importuned him with offers of service. That is the account left to posterity by the Abbé Phelipeaux,‖ Canon and Vicar-General of Meaux. It does not carry conviction, however. Bossuet was not a

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1341.
† Phelipeaux : *Relation du Quiétisme*, vol. i, p. 33.
‡ See *Revue Bossuet* (April 1900, July 1904).
§ *Ibid.* (October 1900) : *Procès Verbaux des Visites Pastorales.*
‖ *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 34.

recluse so absorbed in study and oblivious of the world as to be beguiled by such transparent devices ; he was a man of wide experience, in full possession of all his faculties of observation and deduction, and well able to defend himself. In his own youth he had desired promotion that he might be the better able to serve the Church, and if he descried a like desire in Fénelon he would have given him credit for the same motive. At this time, while Fénelon was still unknown, his aims may have seemed to himself to be absolutely identical with those of his host,* and no vision could have appeared more glorious or more desirable than the ideal of universal unity which was the inspiration of Bossuet's labours. With such a theme in common the dividing gulf of years was negligible. The master was endowed with the youthfulness of spirit which does not cease from planning fresh endeavours till death is on the threshold, and at that time his brain was full of schemes for drawing all the nations within the Church's fold ; while the disciple, Gascon by birth and temperament, could seize on a suggestion and develop it with a zeal and fervour that added to its value even in the eyes of its originator. Thus these two became more and more important to each other, and their alliance promised rich result for the interests of religion and of scholarship. The failure of its development was not the result of any deliberate withdrawal or division, but of the pressure of events.

In 1687 the Superior of the Nouvelles Catholiques was entrusted with a Mission to force the Faith on the Huguenots of Saintonge. The methods of conversion with which he is associated may be criticized by a more tolerant generation, but they won the approval of the King and his prospects after that enterprise were notably improved. It interrupted his personal intercourse with Bossuet for two years, however, and a new vista, of which he had not dreamed in the days of his pleasant labours in the diocese of Meaux, opened out before him. The reign of Madame de Maintenon had become assured in 1683. Tradition (founded on the Saint-Simon

* Crouslé : *Fénelon et Bossuet*, vol. i, p. 55.

Memoirs) is probably at fault in attributing the Revocation Edict to her influence upon the King, but she was aware that the character of Louis was most vulnerable on the religious side and she used her knowledge dexterously. She wished to make the practice of devotion fashionable, and she so managed the King that she succeeded. Only those who satisfied her standard of observance could hope for royal favour. The test was dangerous to sincerity, yet among the favoured were some devout persons who were also honest. Of such were the two sons-in-law of Colbert, M. de Beauvilliers and M. de Chevreuse, and they gathered round them a select few, chiefly of their kindred, who were ready to share their aims and practices. Madame de Maintenon approved the little group, and it owed the importance of its influence largely to her. In 1689 it widened sufficiently to admit the Abbé de Fénelon.

Bossuet was very frequently at Court, and his duties there kept him closely in touch with the household of Madame la Dauphine, over which Madame de Maintenon presided. His intimacy with M. de Chevreuse, moreover, was of many years' standing, and his links with Madame de Luynes and Madame d'Albert at Jouarre strengthened the bond between them. Yet there was never any question of giving him a place within the circle that assembled week by week at the table of M. de Beauvilliers. From the day of his first introduction to them Fénelon was the centre of these devout festivities, and usually they were concluded by his delivery of one of the spiritual lectures known as Conferences.* The Court was aware of the existence of this coterie, and if, as is possible, Bossuet had rather more definite knowledge of its nature and objects than the ordinary courtier, he looked on with approval. The great powers he discerned in Fénelon were dedicated to the service of the Church, and he saw in these new associates the best guides towards preferment that a young man could find. If he suspected that the select circle breathed a hothouse atmosphere his own active part in the Church's

* *Revue Bossuet Supplément* (July 1909).

battles gave him no leisure to reflect on these undeveloped dangers. Moreover, the warmth of his affection for Fénelon was in no way lessened by the interruption of their close association. And here it may be observed that his own sentiments regarding the life of Courts had changed appreciably. Twenty-five years earlier he had warned his listeners in the chapel at the Louvre against the struggle for advancement as involving the barter of personal tastes and personal liberty for prizes of doubtful value and uncertain tenure. In that far distant period his sense of the dangers of the world overruled all other considerations, but experience had modified his views. He saw that the Church needed men of unstained character and brilliant intellect in her high places, and that the advancement of Fénelon promised to be of benefit to her.

In August 1689 the course of events developed on those lines which all well-disposed persons expected and desired. The Duke of Burgundy, eldest son of the Dauphin, having reached an age when he required a governor, M. de Beauvilliers was appointed to that office, with the Abbé de Fénelon as tutor. The sincerity of Bossuet's delight when the news reached him admits of no dispute. He has been represented as twisted in mind and spirit by envy of one who was distinguished by favours of a kind that had never been accorded to himself.* This charge is part of the train of calumny laid to wreck his reputation, but it is defeated by the most superficial survey of his manner of life and his occupations. A man so absorbed in labour, the object of which was to benefit the whole world, had no time for the pettiest of all forms of jealousy, nor is it likely that, with the sense of power, and of the claim of God to use it for His service, burning within him, the great theologian would have exchanged his lot for that of any other man. Fénelon had once more been his guest at Germigny

* See *Correspondance Saint-Fonds* (among reminiscences of Fénelon of great interest). "*M. de Meaux vit avec chagrin qu'on avait pour M. de Cambrai, qui était homme de qualité, des distinctions qu'on n'avait pas eues pour lui*" (Dugas à S.-F., January 8, 1719, p. 90).

for a considerable part of the summer, and, when the news of the appointment reached him, the keenness of his pleasure found expression in a note to Madame de Laval, cousin to the favoured abbé :

"Yesterday my thoughts were full of the benefit to the Church and to the nation. To-day I have had time to reflect on the pleasure this will have meant to you, and to rejoice in it. And moreover, madame, we shall not lose M. l'Abbé de Fénelon. You will still have him in reach, and I—provincial though I am—can snatch a moment now and then to exchange greetings with him."*

Bossuet maintained a vast correspondence, and congratulations to Madame de Laval on her cousin's promotion were not obligatory ; the importance of the letter lies in the fact that it was spontaneous and would never have been written except from the motive of rejoicing that it expresses. It is safe to assume that, amid all his anxieties concerning the nation and the Church, the thought of Fénelon as guide and teacher of a future King of France was a source of deep content to Bossuet. Probably he did not concern himself deeply with the rumours that attributed fantastic opinions to the little company thenceforward to be associated with the royal schoolrooms. A survey of the literary work that he accomplished during these years is sufficient to account for his ignorance in other directions, and his literary work was only a fraction of the charges on his time. He lived arduously, for he was devoted in his service to the souls whom he accepted as his special care, and never forgetful of the duties of his bishopric, while no measure that had for object the welfare of the Church in France would be sanctioned by the King unless he had reviewed it. It was a difficult period in Church politics. The death of Innocent XI in 1689 had lessened the tension that had been steadily increasing since the Clerical Assembly seven years earlier. The King showed some desire to propitiate the succeeding occupants of the Papal Throne and the most pressing cause for anxiety

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 501.

subsided ; but the effect of the drastic measures of Innocent XI had been far-reaching ; the spectacle of thirty-five sees left shepherdless because the authority of King and Pope would not accord, was not edifying either to the Catholics in France or to the Protestants all over Europe. Bossuet maintained his hopeful outlook, but he considered that the encouragement given to the enemies of the Church by the dispute made unremitting vigilance the most pressing of his obligations.

Meanwhile the little cloud, to which even the watchful paid no heed, was slowly gathering volume. The orthodoxy of the austere duenna of the Court, Madame de Maintenon, appeared as unassailable as that of Bossuet himself. It is just at those points, however, where women's influence is most apparent that the history of the seventeenth century is so fruitful of surprises, and the developments at Versailles between 1689 and 1695 were chiefly due to the influence of women. It was difficult to live as a Christian should at Court—Rancé had said that to do so required miraculous powers—and perhaps the main cause of difficulty lay in the sense of dullness that, among leisured and luxurious persons, so often supervened on the first excitement and delight of the experience termed conversion. The routine of the Court, its pomps and ceremonies and artificial pleasures, could hardly fail to become wearisome if gossip and flirtation and intrigue were not permissible. To Madame de Maintenon herself the cessation of the struggle that had lasted twenty years, and left her without a rival, must have involved reaction. It appeared to make her only the more zealous for a severe and rigid way of life, however, and the little company whom she honoured with her intimacy were confronted with the problem of living virtuously at Court and at the same time maintaining the zest and interest necessary to make life endurable. Unaided they could not arrive at its solution.

Now, in the days when Bossuet had striven to direct the King during his transitory conversion, he had recommended more careful use of customary times and methods

of devotion rather than the adoption of new practices ; and such, doubtless, would have been his counsel to devout courtiers at a later period. His direction was at all times of the simplest, and the spiritual needs of the courtiers were not simple. In fact the generation that could use his counsels was already passed ; a new era had brought new needs, and it was Fénelon who showed himself most perfectly equipped to meet them. Personal charm in Fénelon was assisted by his reputation for detachment. He had never pushed his fortunes openly, though birth and capacity justified a claim to high preferment, and a certain mystery enveloped him, as one set apart for some special service. When he moved to Versailles his place as chief in a band of pioneers was waiting for him. The old idea that had been at the root of the Cabale des Dévots * (crushed many years before by secular powers) was revived in the devotees whom he directed. They were to conspire for the spreading of Christ's Kingdom upon earth, and all self-interest must be made subservient to that object. Each individual of the group was sincere, and collectively they were animated by a high ideal. As we read Fénelon's earliest letters of direction, although he shows himself over-minute in detail and lacking in that breadth of view which makes for spiritual health, it is impossible not to recognize the promise of his future genius for guiding and inspiring others.

If these new evangelists had been content to concentrate on the development of their plots for the purification of the Court their personal standard was so high that they must have raised society. It was a most unhappy fate that brought among them a newcomer who was reputed to possess a novel system by which the old commandments gained fresh hold upon the human soul. It was their object to live in an atmosphere of prayer, but they had found it difficult, and their aspirations after perfection seemed to bring them no nearer to its practice. This newcomer professed to show a short and easy road to personal sanctification, and on that plea she gained

* *See* Allier, R. : *La Cabale des Dévots.*

admission to their secret conclave. The story of Madame Guyon * is a familiar one, and the place she occupies in the history of France and of the Church should be allowed its full importance. It was due to her that the friendship of Bossuet and Fénelon was turned into virulent enmity, and that under the pressure of a terrible ordeal the weaknesses of each have been exposed to the criticism of the world. It was her teaching that evoked the Quietism controversy, and she is ultimately responsible for all the commentaries upon it which, during two centuries, have occupied innumerable writers.

The exact point where the Quietist oversteps the legitimate bounds of mysticism is a question for the theologian.† Madame Guyon's teaching, however, was sufficiently extreme for its danger to be evident to any unprejudiced critic. She taught that a Christian should aspire to disinterested love of God, and the glamour of generosity that her phrases carried with them disguised their actual purport. To produce disinterested love both hope and fear must be eliminated and Heaven and Hell alike grow meaningless. This simplification of the spiritual state prepared the soul for that absorption in God which should be the ultimate goal of all believers, but its immediate effect was to remove the incentive to the ordinary practices of religion, including that of prayer in the sense of petition. The spread of Quietism among the courtiers might have continued unchecked if the condemnation of Molinos,‡ the Spanish priest whose instructions on the interior life produced such dangerous results in Rome and Naples, had been less notorious. Paris shared in the great sensation of Rome, however ; the trial of Molinos was recent,§ and the new devotion had much in common with his teaching.

* For authorities on career of Madame Guyon *see* Appendix vii.

† For summary of errors of Molinos and degree of Madame Guyon's participation see *Œuvres de Fénelon*, vol. iv, pp. xc–xcv.

‡ Interesting account of Molinos is given by Bishop Burnet : *First Letter on Quietists* (1689).—*Tracts*, vol. i (1786).

§ 1685. (For contemporary comment *see* Dangeau : *Journal*, July 10, 1685.) The works of the most noteworthy followers of Molinos—Malaval and Falconi—were condemned 1688.

When we turn to the consideration of Madame Guyon herself we approach the domain of the psychologist rather than that of the theologian. Those who find food for astonishment in the acceptance so freely accorded to her mysterious theories ignore the evidence of hypnotic power which is furnished by the contemporary records of her personal dealings. Of her it may be said that she was self-hypnotized, for even the most fervent of her disciples could not rival her own conviction of her supernatural mission, and from this unassailable sincerity she derived a force which no charlatan, however skilful, could command. Madame Guyon believed that God intended her to teach the world a new method of approach to Him. The old ways of prayer were proved to be inadequate seeing that the world remained alienated from God, and the time had come for mankind to be given the opportunity of a fresh beginning. Before she came to Paris she had travelled in France and in Savoy, founding centres for her teaching, and during her travels she had the assistance and companionship of a Barnabite Religious, Père La Combe. Her methods and their success aroused suspicion, and on her arrival in Paris she was imprisoned. From that experience she derived the certainty that her mission had received the sacred seal of persecution.

Her imprisonment is explained by the tidings that were continually reaching Paris from the provinces of the ravages wrought by the Quietists and their teaching. Amid the many excitements and distractions of the capital the majority of the faithful were proof against a temptation which revealed itself only to those whose minds were concentrated on religion ; it was in smaller circles, where a single influence becomes dominant more easily, that the infection had spread with astounding rapidity. The worst plague-spot in France was Burgundy,* and Dijon, that home of piety with all its hallowed memories of Madame de Chantal and François de Sales, was in danger of deplorable corruption. The Burgundian Quietists by publishing their "Maxims" had managed to enlighten the public mind with regard to the results

* Chérot : *Le Quiétisme en Bourgogne et à Paris.*

of their convictions. They were so thoroughly imbued with the theory of the absorption of the human self in Divine Perfection that they eschewed those practices prescribed by the Church for erring mortals. The worst feature of the movement could be traced to the perverted teaching of certain individual priests, and was illustrated by the custom of allowing the laity to remove the Sacred Host (in silver boxes specially designed for the purpose) that they might communicate at any hour of the day or night—the state of privilege attained by the Quietist being such, according to the new teaching, that the Sacrament of Penance had no more significance. To acknowledge the possibility of sinning was to disavow the first principle of Quietism, and when, in an interview that sealed her fate, Madame Guyon declared to Bossuet * that she could not ask forgiveness for her sins, she was only adhering to a fundamental dogma of Quietist belief.

It is interesting to trace in the writings of the Mystics the realization, born of their own experience, that the way to which they had been called was shadowed by the perpetual danger of spiritual presumption. Those especially who directed souls in the confessional or within the cloister had strong foreboding of the darker evils which Molinos and his followers brought to maturity. "There are some"—wrote Juan d'Avila—"who believe themselves to be so far possessed by the Holy Spirit that their every impulse is inspired by God. If they feel no impulse they leave undone even that which is right. If they have an impulse in any direction, even though it be evil and contrary to God's commandment, they do not hesitate to obey it because it must be of Divine inspiration and the liberty to which they have attained must emancipate them from every other law."† And eighty years later Ste. Chantal presented the same case in another form: "We hear so much of interior experience and extraordinary graces, and so little of self-denial and the practice of good life."‡

* *Relation sur le Quiétisme*, section ii, part xx (*Œuvres*, vol. xx).

† *Audi Filia, cap. L* (translated from Spanish by Arnauld d'Audilly, Paris 1673).

‡ *Œuvres de Ste. Chantal*, vol. i, p. 545.

Unfortunately the conclusions that did not accord with their own predilections were overlooked by the devout students of that period, and they hailed Madame Guyon as having a share in the privileges accorded to the Mystics. She had made disciples in the provinces whose influence at Court procured her release from arbitrary imprisonment, and secured her welcome among those most able to appreciate her. The circle to which she was introduced by Madame de Mortemart, a widowed daughter of the Minister Colbert, seemed to be waiting for her. Living as she did in a chronic condition of mental and spiritual exaltation, she breathed freely in the atmosphere of mystery which the devout conspirators strove to maintain at their weekly gatherings, and the reverence, which the privileges she claimed would merit, was accorded to her at once by each one of the great personages among whom she found herself. And her Autobiography reveals that she was by no means indifferent to the rank of her associates. Fénelon, alone of all the band, showed no eagerness to make her acquaintance and was slower in yielding than the rest, but his eventual subjugation was not the less complete, and when he, who was the leader of the devout cabal, accepted her at her own valuation her footing was absolutely secure.

Madame Guyon had made her appearance among the pious duchesses a few months before the formation of the Duke of Burgundy's household, and the march of public events swept her into a position of importance which no deliberate scheming could have won for her. The Institution of Saint Cyr was then one of the favourite themes for interest and for conversation in a society that strove heroically to banish scandal. It had been founded by the King's munificence, that girls of noble birth might be educated by a Community of Religious under the supervision of Madame de Maintenon, and it gave practical exposition of the theories for the up-bringing of the young in which that austere lady took delight.*

* For an admirable account of inauguration of Saint Cyr *see* Mme. Saint-René Taillandier: *Madame de Maintenon* (1920).

It is probable that Madame Guyon intended from the first to gain entrance to Saint Cyr; it was a centre of influence calculated to be extremely useful for the promulgation of her doctrines, and among its inmates was her kinswoman, Madame de La Maisonfort. At this period of her career her capacity for imposing her wishes on unlikely subjects is remarkable.* The prudence of Madame de Maintenon, by some mysterious process, was beguiled, and the carefully guarded lambs within the royal sheepfold were exposed to a danger against which they were defenceless. The enthusiasm of Madame de Maintenon for the sublime spirituality of Madame Guyon carried her further than Fénelon approved;† he did not regard the pupils of Saint Cyr or their instructresses as good subjects for initiation into mysteries which he himself approached with awe and reverence. In spite of the prudence and good sense that he displayed in this particular, however, it is evident that the new prophetess owed her success with prominent courtiers chiefly to his support and sympathy. The sequel to that success was irreparable disaster.

Madame de Maintenon received the first clear warning as to the possible result of her ill-judged action from her confessor, Godet Desmarets, Bishop of Chartres, who thenceforward showed himself to be a quiet but determined opponent of the new teaching.‡ He had the support of the most celebrated preacher of the day, Père Bourdaloue. In 1687 Madame Guyon had written a book called "The Short Method of Prayer," which was condemned by the Inquisition in Rome in 1689. If its condemnation had been known to the Jesuit preacher it is unlikely that he would have delivered any judgment on the book. His personal opinion was asked, however, and it accorded with that of the Roman censors. It appeared to him that the writer contradicted the teaching on prayer given by Christ and reiterated by the saints. She wished to abolish petition, thanksgiving, acts of surrender and of contrition, and to retain only simple acts of faith:

* *Œuvres de Fénelon*, vol. iv, p. 16.

† Phelipeaux: *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 48, 51. ‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 57, 69.

" To propose this method to all sorts of persons without discrimination as preferable to that which Jesus Christ taught to His disciples, and through them to the whole Church ; to assert that this method is more necessary to salvation, more useful for the sanctifying of souls, for acquiring virtue and expelling vice, more suited to average ignorant persons, and easier for them to practise than the usual way of meditation ; to give up spiritual reading and vocal prayer and the effort of self-examination for this method, and to go so far as to make it a substitute for the dispositions proper to the Sacrament of Penance ; these things—with which this ' Short Method ' is overflowing—seem to me to be all equally perilous."*

It was thus that Madame Guyon's great discovery appeared to one who approached it without prejudice but with the light of a priest's experience. Her short cut to perfection was attractive † to those who were weary of the beaten paths followed by every faithful Christian ; she taught that by a great surrender the human will might be united to the Will of God, after which all further effort was to be avoided. Thereafter sin was represented by any failure of complete passivity, for ordinary sin was incompatible with the state of unity which had been achieved. When this doctrine was promulgated among the nuns and schoolgirls at Saint Cyr religious observances were neglected and rules broken, until Madame de Maintenon, menaced by the consequences of her own folly, threw off the enchantment that had held her and became once more the vigilant shepherdess whose dearest interest was the safe-keeping of her flock. She it was who had sent Madame Guyon's book to Père Bourdaloue, and his comments on it sustained the conclusion to which she was inclining. Thenceforward all novelties in devotion were banished from

* Chérot : *Bourdaloue—Sa Correspondance*, etc., p. 122.

† For typical suggestion see *Moyen Court*, etc., part vi—" *d'être indifférent à toutes choses soit pour le corps, soit pour l'âme, pour les biens temporels et éternels, laisser le passé dans l'oubli, l'avenir à la providence, et donner le présent à Dieu.*"

Saint Cyr. If Madame Guyon had been a solitary innovator her disappearance from Versailles and the prohibition placed upon her books might have disposed finally of the danger she had created. Unfortunately she gave utterance to the inarticulate murmurs of innumerable * voices ; her conviction that her ideas had originated with herself was merely the result of her peculiar mentality, and the danger involved was so insidious that simple souls had real need of protection.

A protector, watchful and competent, was at hand. At many points in her difficult experience Madame Guyon had displayed remarkable perspicacity, but under the first threat of really serious danger she made an irrevocable blunder. Bossuet was known personally to her friends at Versailles, the character of his mind was no secret, and to the ordinary intelligence his attitude towards the fantastic doctrine of "Le Moyen Court" must have been a foregone conclusion. Yet Madame Guyon was eager to submit her writings to Bossuet, and appears to have relied on her own powers of persuasion to secure his verdict in her favour. Her failure to impress him marks the turning-point in the fortunes of her cause. Her capacity for influence, which she and her followers regarded as a supernatural grace, was completely ineffective in her intercourse with him, and the shock to her self-confidence disturbed her judgment. She grew fertile in tricks and stratagems, and Bossuet was deceived by her repeatedly. With each exposure of deception he became more fixed in his resolve to silence her, and after 1695, when she was imprisoned at Vincennes, it was the legend of Madame Guyon rather than her personality that stirred enthusiasm among the devout. He believed the importance of the cause he was defending justified extreme severity. Whether his drastic method served his cause may now—after two centuries have elapsed—be questioned.

* Bishop Burnet describes the prevalence of Quietist suggestion in 1689. See *Tracts*, vol. i, p. 141.

Chapter XXI. *The Combat**

WHEN Bossuet agreed to examine the writings of Madame Guyon he approached them without prejudice, and he had no inkling that he was on the threshold of the fiercest and most absorbing controversy of his life. It was not till five years later that he resolved to place the facts of the dispute, as they appeared to him, before the world.† At the beginning of that record he declared that he would not attempt to explain or comment, but having offered his remembrances before God would set down events as he might remember them. As he proceeded, however, passion got the better of him, and he failed to adhere to this laudable intention. His writing did not lose in force on this account ; even when indignation betrayed his judgment the perfection of his style remains unmarred. Nevertheless, as the mordant paragraphs succeed each other, the sense of anger as their inspiration forces itself upon the reader ; it would seem that his fingers trembled with it as they gripped the pen.

He tells us he had been warned of Fénelon's predilection for " the new ways of prayer " years before the matter gained publicity. He had tried then to draw him into discussion on the subject, but had found him unresponsive, and matters that appeared more urgent had intervened. When, in the autumn of 1693, the invitation came to him to examine the writings of Madame Guyon it took him by surprise, and he consented unwillingly and under pressure, not feeling it to be a part of the labour to which he was called. Finding later that the task was entrusted to him at Fénelon's desire, he entered upon it with greater zeal, and set aside his own employments to study the printed works and voluminous manuscripts submitted to him. He did not pronounce any opinion till he had taken five months for reflection and had had frequent communication with Madame Guyon herself. Her verbal explanations only increased the disgust with which her voluminous writings inspired

* For list of authorities on Quietism Controversy *see* Appendix vii.

† *Œuvres*, vol. xx: *Relation sur le Quiétisme*.

him, and when he was satisfied that nothing further with regard to her strange doctrines remained to be discovered he hastened to lay the fruit of his inquiry before Fénelon. The interview took place in the Court tutor's apartment at Versailles, and Bossuet went there full of confidence that his report would be effective in destroying the mysterious attraction of Madame Guyon and her spiritual vagaries. If he had been less impervious to the charm this woman exercised he would,* without doubt, have been far better able to deal with its results. He regarded it as negligible because he was himself unaffected by it, and his subsequent errors in strategy were largely due to his failure at this point to use imagination. His love and admiration for Fénelon at this period are quite unquestionable, and he had no dearer object in his laborious examination of Madame Guyon than to disabuse his friend regarding the merits of her teaching. "It is always my belief that truth must convince if only it obtains a hearing," he wrote, "and I could not have a moment's doubt that M. l'Abbé de Fénelon would listen."† Here once again he could not allow the possibility of truth in an opinion that differed from his own, and he regarded Fénelon as the victim of a transitory hallucination. Otherwise it was inexplicable that one who had paid him unfailing deference through all their years of intercourse, could give greater weight to the rhapsodies of a self-constituted prophetess than to the presentation of his own considered judgment. Fénelon's surprise at the tenour of that judgment was also entirely sincere. With his knowledge of the degree to which Bossuet was dominated by zeal for the Faith ‡ he had not feared to expose the doctrines of this new teacher to the scrutiny of the great theologian. Nothing could demonstrate his confidence in her more clearly.

The seed of the quarrel that dishonoured both was sown in that interview, although it was only after many months that it sprang into visible life. At the time

* *See* Matter: *Le Mysticisme au temps de Fénelon*, p. 157.

† *Relation*, etc., section ii, part i.

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. v, No. 715.

Bossuet retired in real dismay, shaken—as he says—in confidence in his own mental balance if one so marvellously endowed as Fénelon could be thus deluded. His next step was to send a long letter to Madame Guyon condemning her teaching and recommending that she should abstain from further writing and go into retirement. She replied, promising submission and obedience.*

This was in March 1694. Madame de Maintenon, by this time, had awakened to full knowledge of the danger to which she had exposed her precious charges at Saint Cyr. Even if Madame Guyon's submission had been sincere, her followers were already too deeply impregnated by the magic of her doctrine for its suppression to be easily accomplished, and, in fact, Madame Guyon had small concern with sincerity ; she yielded only to force, and always with reservations that contradicted the pledges she had given. To remain in retirement of her own free will was against her conscience, and when, in the summer, she brought herself again into prominence her action was probably dictated by fine motives. She petitioned that Bossuet should make his examination of her writings more formal, and should associate with him Antoine de Noailles (at that time Bishop of Chalons) and M. Tronson, Superior of the Congregation of St. Sulpice. The latter was unknown to Bossuet † and deeply attached to Fénelon, and it is likely that Madame Guyon, unshaken in her conviction that her whole being was possessed by Divine inspiration, believed that the two new critics would oppose the unwelcome verdict already given and range ecclesiastical authority upon her side. The new suggestion was received with the utmost joy by Bossuet, and for eight months a series of conferences took place at Issy, in the neighbourhood of Paris, a branch house of the Seminary of St. Sulpice. It is evident that the question of Madame Guyon and her writings was regarded by each one of the three examiners as having

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, Nos. 1004, 1007.

† *Revue Bossuet Supplément*, p. 177.

assumed grave importance—" it stood for nothing less than the revival of Quietism ; there were symptoms in parts of the kingdom that this was on its way," * and to each one of them equally the necessity of condemnation was clear. The manner of its delivery demanded caution, however, not on account of the culprit herself, but because the Abbé de Fénelon was implicated to a degree that had become alarming. During their deliberations he had written frequently to explain and elaborate the theories that were engaging them, and there could be no doubt of his sympathy with the new doctrine. There is no reason to question Bossuet's assertion that the three had no dearer object than to shield and to convince one to whom they accorded so much love and admiration ; and Fénelon's constant protestations of humility lessened their apprehensions. Finally Thirty-Four Articles were drawn up containing the errors found in Madame Guyon's writings and their condemnation. On March 10, 1695, these were signed at Issy.

The King had heard of Madame Guyon and her heresy, but he knew nothing of the devout conspiracy of which Fénelon was ringleader.† Rumour is difficult to silence, however, and it was possible that the whole story might reach him at any time. As a safeguard against the effect of such a disaster Fénelon was invited to collaborate in framing the Articles at Issy, and thus establish himself as one of the chosen defenders of the Faith against the ravages of Quietism. He stipulated for certain alterations which he regarded as important, and when these were accepted he signed the Articles. He had just been nominated Archbishop of Cambrai, and it was more than ever necessary that his orthodoxy should be assured. Once his name was appended to the condemnation of Madame Guyon the weight of anxiety that had preyed upon his friends was lifted, and to many minds even the danger of the doctrine itself became negligible if it was known that he disclaimed it. The

* *Relation*, section iii, part ii.

† *Ibid.*, section iii, part ix.

tidings that the Abbé de Fénelon concurred in the unanimous decision of the three judges spread swiftly through the ranks of the devout, and a spirit of generous friendliness prevailed. A little later the new archbishop was consecrated by the hands of Bossuet, and Madame Guyon withdrew to the Visitation Convent at Meaux (the place of retirement chosen by herself). To all appearance the sky was once more clear.

Before returning to his disputations with the Protestants Bossuet applied himself to the production of a study on prayer, the celebrated treatise *Sur les États d'Oraison*.* Among the motives that engaged him in this new enterprise must be counted his disgust and irritation at the astounding assertions of Madame Guyon : in his eyes she was both ignorant and crazy—"a woman who ought never to have been allowed to write anything."† His attitude towards her differed essentially from that of his two colleagues, who seem to have remained detached and undisturbed throughout their examination, and this difference did not escape the observation of Fénelon. Probably the clue to subsequent events lies in the effervescence of intellectual indignation which Bossuet permitted himself. The truth was so true to him, and the hallucinations of the prophetess were so obviously false, that the thought of the credence they had won drove him to frenzy. And Fénelon was a Gascon, full of impulses and of enthusiasm ; below the submission that had seemed so spontaneous there had lurked resentment at the assertiveness of the great theologian. Christ had taught that there were mysteries which were hidden from the wise and learned, and it was easy, on reflection, to find in the scholarship of Bossuet just that barrier against spiritual enlightenment which the Gospel warning indicated.

It was native individuality in each that brought Bossuet and Fénelon into conflict.‡ There was not on

* *Œuvres*, vol. xviii. † *Relation*, section v, part ix.

‡ The writers most effective in justifying the action of Bossuet are M. Brunetière : *Bossuet* (1913); and M. Léon Crouslé : *Fénelon et Bossuet*.

either side a scheme rooted in long-past happenings and prompted by base motives of spite or jealousy ; such legends may have been believed by their respective partisans, but they draw no support from facts. It chanced that the same events challenged them both, that they were taken unawares, and that the natural man was master before the acquired habit of self-control by which, ordinarily, they were guided assumed direction. For the student of human nature there is no episode in history more interesting, nor would it be easy to find one more painful. These two were by far the greatest figures in the Church of that period. They held power by their speech, their writing, and their influence that was of incalculable value to the cause of righteousness, and it may be claimed for both that they were righteous men. Yet for three years they fought one against the other with a passion of animosity that spread dismay among the faithful and provoked heretics to triumphant mirth. The truth regarding that notorious quarrel has, ever since, been confused by the tendency in those who write of it to assign the whole responsibility either to one side or the other. In fact the balance is not easy to adjust. At the first stage Bossuet's indignation was directed towards Madame Guyon only ; she was the traducer and Fénelon merely the victim of a temporary aberration. A hint to the King regarding the suspicions that were rife would have ruined Fénelon's prospects, and no such hint was given. At the second stage, when the royal tutor had become Archbishop of Cambrai and Madame Guyon was banished from Versailles, Bossuet wrote his treatise, *Sur les États d'Oraison*, in all good faith, to enforce his condemnation of the prophetess and her doctrine. His confidence in his own judgment was unwavering, and his sole object was the defence of the Church against the advance of a dangerous and insidious heresy. As he wrote the pamphlet that was to put the crowning touch to the work of the Conference at Issy, the calm of his library at Meaux was undisturbed by any portent of the conflagration of human passions, of jealousy and malice and suspicion, that was so soon

to burst into evidence before the world. Nor when it blazed before him did he guess that his own unconscious self-sufficiency was responsible for kindling it. As soon as his work was complete he placed the manuscript in the hands of the new archbishop * with a request for criticism and for the formal signification of his approval. Fénelon was about to remove to his diocese, and three weeks later, in August 1696, the book was returned to its author at Versailles by M. de Chevreuse. It had not been read, and the suggested sanction did not accompany it.† That was the first shot fired, and only to a few did it serve as warning of the coming battle.

It was hard for Bossuet to brook such an affront from one who owed him respect and gratitude. He curbed his anger, however, and proceeded with the correction and printing of his book. It was announced to appear in March, and was to contain the great theologian's commentary and final judgment on the subjects treated in the Articles of Issy. In February another commentary on the same questions from an opposing point of view was in the hands of all whom it might interest. It was from the pen of the Archbishop of Cambrai, and it was called *Les Maximes des Saints*.

The English mind in the twentieth century can regard episcopal antagonism without serious disquiet, and it is, therefore, extremely difficult to realize the dismay by which Bossuet was overwhelmed when the news reached him. From the standpoint of the mere writer an outrage on the canons of literary etiquette had been committed, but that was as nothing in comparison with the deadly thrust aimed at the centre of the Church's strength: its unity in thought and teaching. The real object of Fénelon's book, ostensibly a comparison between true and false mysticism, was to show that the doctrine of Madame Guyon, condemned by the Articles

* *Relation*, section iii, part xvi.

† The sub-title suggests an excuse for the conduct of Fénelon : "*Premier traité où sont exposées les erreurs des faux mystiques de nos jours.*" *See* also his letter to Bossuet August 5, 1696 (*Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1402).

of Issy, was innocent of the heresy of Molinos, and was not distinguishable from that of the canonized mystics.* Without doubt an instinct of chivalry was in part responsible for his action. He and Madame Guyon had been allies ; if she merited disgrace he had no right to the favour and prosperity he was enjoying, and he risked jeopardizing his own fortunes for her deliverance. Such a consideration, being merely personal, could have had no weight with Bossuet when the safety of the Church was concerned. Thenceforward Fénelon appeared to him as faithless, irresponsible, a potential traitor. He sprang to that conclusion swiftly, and never reconsidered it. He was seventy years old, and he found himself flouted before the world by the man he had befriended. He believed his indignation to be wholly righteous ; evidently he did not suspect that the enormity of the offence against himself might contribute to the violence with which he condemned the offender. In a confidential letter † he could write that his pain was all for the Church and the disgrace that must fall on one who had been the closest of his friends and for whom he still had a sincere affection, but already he was admitting the thought that Fénelon's submissiveness had only been assumed till his archbishopric was secure.‡

Events developed slowly. At the earliest opportunity Le Tellier, Archbishop of Rheims, who was a politician rather than a man of prayer, drew the attention of the King to the new study of the " Maxims of the Saints," and explained its connection with the Quietist doctrine. The King was consistent in discouraging all novelties in matters of religion, and Quietism was known to be particularly abhorrent to him. He summoned Bossuet, and taxed him with concealing his knowledge of the erroneous opinions of one so highly placed as Fénelon. The charge was justified, and Bossuet's expression of remorse may well have been sincere, for he had, in

* Bossuet had already been assured on his behalf "*qu'il ne pouvait condamner Madame Guyon*" (*Relation*, section iii, part xvi).

† *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1477.

‡ *Relation*, section v, part xxii.

collusion with Madame de Maintenon, Desmarets, and his two colleagues of the Issy conferences, deliberately shielded Fénelon and made Madame Guyon the solitary scapegoat for the evil done.* His consciousness of age and dignity taught him to curb the ardour of denunciation in the presence of the King, but there is sufficient ground for assuming that he had determined, before the end of that interview with their royal master, either to force a recantation from Fénelon or to drive him into disgrace and consequent impotence. If this was his design it was facilitated by the course of action chosen by the culprit.

It is an important characteristic of the opening of this battle that each of the two adversaries was absolutely convinced of the integrity of his cause, of the purity of his motives, and that the truth of his belief was so self-evident that ultimately it must be shared by all right-thinking people. Each of the two rival books was designed to elucidate a subject which was full of difficulties for the unwary, and to discount the danger of false teaching. Disappointment fell to the share of Fénelon. He had striven to show that the so-called novelty in prayer, made popular by Madame Guyon, was only the old teaching of the saints, and he failed to carry conviction. He did not hesitate to attribute the failure to a conspiracy instigated by the Bishop of Meaux, but it was not the less disastrous on that account. It was plain that he was in a position demanding the utmost prudence. Unfortunately the idea of defending Madame Guyon and of spreading the knowledge of her great discovery made other considerations of little weight. When sufficient time had passed after the publication of *Les Maximes* to show that in France the general verdict of disapproval was not likely to be reversed, the Archbishop of Cambrai asked permission of the King to go to Rome, that he might place his book in the hands of the Pope and obtain judgment from the supreme head of the Church. The request caused the King's wrath to overflow. Fénelon was deprived of his tutorship to

* Phelipeaux: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 117.

the princes, and banished to his diocese with orders to remain within its limits. Permission to send the book to Rome was given, however, for the King's advisers, of whom in all things that concerned the Church Bossuet was chief, were as confident of the evil in the book as was its author of its excellence.

In surveying the effect of the battle on the character of Bossuet it is well to realize that he entered on it believing that it would be brief and decisive. He knew that Fénelon had powerful supporters. "Monseigneur de Cambrai relies on Cardinal de Bouillon and the Jesuits. All his skill is being called into use, but thus far the truth has prevailed, and will continue to do so by the good pleasure of God."* The note of confidence in himself and in his cause is evident in his letters at this stage. He had indeed convinced himself that in combatting the doctrine of *Les Maximes* he was fighting an insidious evil for which the powers of darkness were responsible. "The whole of religion is involved in this quarrel," he declared.†

The human interest of this extraordinary combat is so great that it is calculated to obscure the point at issue. And, indeed, where the relation of Bossuet to Madame Guyon is concerned the resentment of a scholar towards the rhapsodies of a presumptuous woman is interwoven with the critical condemnation of the doctrine of *Le Moyen Court.* His difference with Fénelon, however, so far from being comprehensive, was acute only on one point. The torrent of their explanations and retorts suggests propinquity of two great intellects rather than their divergence,‡ yet the barrier between them remained. Fénelon had attempted to express a doctrine that was absolutely clear to himself, and only became intricate when he endeavoured to propound it for the help of others. It was the doctrine known as Disinterested Love, which was supposed to imply indifference to salvation and will be found as presented by

* *Correspondance,* vol. viii, No. 1508. † *Ibid.,* vol. ix, No. 1591.

‡ See *Analyse de la Controverse* (*Œuvres de Fénelon,* vol. iv, pp. ccxxi, ccxxviii, and vol. xxiii, pp. 75, 76).

him in his *Maximes des Saints* to support that interpretation. Only in his spiritual letters does he manifest the full beauty of his thought. As there depicted his vision of the spiritual submission and surrender that spurns all calculation is infinitely inspiring. He could explain it to himself and his disciples so that it accorded with the teaching of Christ and of the Church, but he forgot that the pronouncements contained in *Les Maximes* might travel beyond the reach of his explanations, and that the rarefied atmosphere in which he and his friends breathed freely might be fatal to the spiritual health of persons less gifted and less experienced.

Bossuet regarded the theory of Disinterested Love as heretical in itself, subversive of the whole teaching of the Church, and calculated to spread dissension and uncertainty among the faithful.* The longer he considered it the more violent became his abhorrence. Explanations were only an aggravation of the original offence: he demanded an unconditional withdrawal, and would not countenance any attempt at compromise. Fénelon could not comply without denying that which he regarded as the truth,† and therefore his appeal to Rome became inevitable. In the history of the celebrated controversy that ensued there is material for many volumes, but its record, honestly treated, is not edifying. The Princess Palatine described it as "a quarrel among bishops with nothing in it but intrigue," and it was inevitable that, to the mass of onlookers in Rome or Paris, the vital question in dispute should lose significance as the interest in the stages of the actual combat deepened. Even before the machinery of the Roman courts was set in motion many issues that seemed to have no bearing on the question became involved. It was typical of the state of public feeling that the old strife concerning the Clerical Assembly of 1682 should grow hot again, and the cry be raised that Bossuet and

* See *États d'Oraison*, liv. iv, and liv. x: *Sur l'Article xxxii* (*Œuvres*, vol. xviii).

† See *Instruction Pastorale*, September 1697 (*Œuvres de Fénelon*, vol. iv, p. 180).

his royal master had defied the authority which they were now invoking.

The supporters of Fénelon discerned at a very early stage that if judgment were delivered promptly it would go against him, and they resorted to every expedient by which the real question might be complicated. The first committee of examiners met in August 1697, and sat eighty-five times before, in September 1698, they referred their report to a Congregation of Cardinals. This august body met thirty-seven times in the five months that ensued,* and unless the Papal authority had intervened to hasten matters the controversy might not have ended in the lifetime of Bossuet. We have the testimony † of Souin, his steward, that he could ill afford the expense in which its long duration had involved him; and the tax it laid on brain and temper was far more serious. It is difficult now to go back to the beginning of the inquiry and realize his anticipations with regard to it, but in condemning his violence it should always be remembered that he had no doubt that he was combatting heresy and could not regard this as a subject for disputation. He was aghast at the success of a presentation which he could only designate as a disguise, and his powers were continually strained by the effort to expose dissimulation in his opponent. Fénelon had that gift for diverting an argument from the points at issue which is regarded as the main support of feminine disputants. Bossuet, vigorous though he was, had to bear the burden of his years ; he found himself mocked and thwarted by the rapid moves of an intellect far nimbler than his own, and ultimately a stage was reached when his righteous zeal was not to be distinguished from unregenerate anger.

As the weeks passed on his unwilling perceptions were forced to admit that the personal charm of the author of *Les Maximes* was becoming an important element in the contest. The suggestion was outrageous ; nevertheless, it could not be denied. The

* Serrant : *L'Abbé de Rancé et Bossuet*, p. 539.

† See *Revue Bossuet* (1900), p. 82.

charm of Fénelon shone from the printed page in each one of his Questions, his Responses, and his Explanations ; he had the power to seize the imagination and bewitch the mind, and Bossuet, whose life-work had been built on a foundation of solid learning, whose triumphs had been won by logic and clear statement, found himself faced with the possibility of ultimate defeat. At the opening of hostilities it had been the chief object of endeavour with Fénelon's supporters to force Bossuet into the position of accuser and individual antagonist. In vain he asserted that his cause was the cause of all bishops and of the whole Church,* that the battle was that of truth against error. He found himself regarded as one of the parties in a duel. Fénelon, with the genius of the tactician, discerned that there was everything to be gained as between himself and Bossuet by insistence on the personal element.†

Antoine de Noailles became Archbishop of Paris in August 1695. He was a lover of peace, and by his intimacy with Madame de Maintenon he had a hold upon the King. Neither he nor Godet Desmarets nor M. Tronson desired to press the case against Fénelon ; they believed that a peaceful settlement was possible even after the publication of *Les Maximes*, and it was Bossuet who refused to let the matter rest. He judged that the dexterity of the offender (afterwards turned against himself with disastrous effect) made him a danger to the Church. " If it were not for me the whole affair would drop . . . I stand alone,"‡ he wrote in the June of the fatal year 1697. Phelipeaux, who was deeply in his confidence, describes his solemn denunciation of his colleagues for their timidity : " You can do as you will," he said, " but I warn you that I shall proclaim these heresies, to which you cannot pretend to be indifferent, before Heaven and earth. I will make my voice heard

* *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1541.

† *See*, for instance, pamphlet of January 1699 beginning " *Monseigneur, je m'adresse à vous, comme à la source de tous les desseins formés contre moi* " (*Œuvres de Fénelon*, vol. ix, p. 59).

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1515.

in Rome and throughout the world. At least it shall not be said that the cause of righteousness slipped from the hands of cowards. If you leave me alone none the less I will go forward, for God has shown me the peril that threatens souls, and I am confident that He will not desert me or His Church and that truth will prevail."*

Neither Noailles nor Desmarets was competent to sustain a contest with Fénelon even if they had wished to do so. The genius displayed by the Archbishop of Cambrai was a source of amazement to friends and enemies alike. The volleys of letters and pamphlets fired continuously towards Rome and Paris gave example of his skill † alike in persuasive eloquence and in vehement abuse. He never flagged in ardour or in wit, and in the seclusion of Cambrai he wrote with his eye upon that world-wide audience which his imagination conjured up.

"He is on fire with cleverness; he is immeasurably cleverer than I am"‡—so Bossuet had declared before warfare became inevitable, and it is clear that if the case against *Les Maximes* had not been overwhelmingly strong Fénelon would have triumphed. As soon as the examiners of his book had been nominated, and he could feel war was declared, his kinsman the Abbé de Chanterac, the most adequate representative he could have chosen, was sent to Rome from Cambrai. And from that moment every thread of influence that he could by any means command was woven into the fabric of his purpose. He meant to justify himself, to emerge from a time of trial welcomed and acclaimed by an admiring world, having silenced the harsh and insistent voice of that aged champion of the Faith to whose opinions he had professed himself as so ready to defer. Chanterac,§ no less than Fénelon, owed his training to

* Phelipeaux: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 264.

† During the year 1698 Fénelon was responsible for thirty-eight separate publications. *See* Cherel: *Fénelon au 18me Siècle* (*Tableaux Bibliographiques*).

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. viii, appendix iii, p. 506.

§ Delplanque: *Fénelon et ses Amis*, p. 286.

M. Tronson, and his record was worthy of the best traditions of St. Sulpice. It must be remembered, however, that the Sulpician school of thought was very different from that of Bossuet's circle, and it was possible for the ingenious to twist certain expressions of M. Olier * into accordance with the teaching of Madame Guyon. The innate good sense of M. Tronson had distinguished between the dangerous subtleties of Fénelon's doctrine and the mysticism of M. Olier, thereby preserving the Conferences of Issy from dissension, but Chanterac found in Fénelon's theory of Disinterested Love a natural development of the convictions they had both acquired at St. Sulpice, and his loyalty to his leader never faltered. In this matter of representation—as in others that made appeal to sentiment and imagination—Fénelon had the advantage over his adversaries.

An unfortunate chance placed the affairs of the accusing bishops in the hands of the young Abbé Bossuet,† nephew of the Bishop of Meaux. He had gone to Rome with the Abbé Phelipeaux, his uncle's vicar-general, in May of the previous year, and his return, fixed for June 1697, was stopped that he and his companion (in whose prudence and acumen Bossuet had confidence) should undertake to watch the case against *Les Maximes*. Jacques Bénigne the younger is in a great degree responsible for the shadows at the close of his uncle's life. The great theologian, as his years advanced, became more occupied with the studies to which he had been called and less balanced in his view of ordinary matters, and he did not bring his power of discrimination to bear on the character of his brother's son. All that was softest in his nature was displayed in the affection that he bestowed upon his namesake during youth and early manhood, but as time passed indulgence degenerated into weakness. The young man was clever, and must have had attractive qualities, and if his position be considered fairly the severe test

* Giry: *Vie de M. J. J. Olier*, p. 49 (1687).

† MSS. Bib. Nat., ff. 11431: *Vie de Messire J. B. Bossuet;* and Jovy, E.: *Une Biographie inédite.*

to which his character was subjected must be acknowledged. A sudden chance assigned to him a conspicuous place for which his antecedents had not prepared him, for his thirty-four years in the world had been passed without distinction. In his voluminous letters from Rome the self-importance induced by the great charge consigned to him may be traced in gradual development until it reaches the stage of impudence when he admonishes the Pope.* If he had occupied the subordinate position which would naturally have fallen to his lot, and missed the temptations of extravagance and self-aggrandisement to which his life in Rome exposed him, his real affection and admiration for his uncle † might have dominated less worthy tendencies. As events fell out he did grave injury to those interests which he was commissioned to protect, in spite of the success which he achieved. In the methods of this warfare there was such endless scope for cunning. The pamphlets, written and printed secretly on either side, depended on the method of distribution for their efficacy in altering opinion. If the latest pamphlets, arriving post-haste from Paris, could not fulfil their purpose by fair means there was no backstairs intrigue to which the Abbé Bossuet would not stoop to gain advantage. Frenchmen were often baffled by Roman guile,‡ but he was swift in adapting himself § to methods that roused his admiration. And the agent compromised the reputation of the principal. "Bossuet and his nephew were completely in accord in their views and intentions over this affair of Quietism"—so runs the chronicle.‖

The struggle lasted two years, impoverishing and demoralizing both principals and agents. In March 1699 the judgment of Innocent XII, condemning *Les*

* *Correspondance*, vol. xi, Nos. 1838, 1858, 1901, 1903.

† See *Ibid.*, No. 1864; and *J. B. Bossuet, Évêque de Troyes—Lettres et Instructions Pastorales* (1733), showing understanding and reverence for Bossuet's teaching.

‡ For intimate revelation of intrigue see appendices to *Correspondance*, vols. viii, ix, x, xi—*Lettres sur le Quiétisme*.

§ Jovy, E.: *op. cit.*, p. 6.

‖ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Maximes, was pronounced. Nominally Fénelon was defeated, but he had succeeded in his deliberate endeavour to win the sympathy of his audience. The honours of the day were his although he had been disarmed in the sight of all men. His book was condemned as containing errors, but his opponents had learnt to regard his personality as a danger infinitely greater than his book, and he was not discredited. The Pope's decision did not alienate a single one of his disciples ; it merely touched a volume he had written of which everyone was already weary. And yet his fate was hard, for the exile that began when he appealed to Rome was maintained until he died, and year by year he hoped persistently for the recall that never came.

In July 1697 Cardinal Bouillon had written to Madame de Maintenon : " When a matter such as this is referred to a higher tribunal it may be in the interest of the purity of dogma, but assuredly it will not conduce to the peace of the Church."* He showed himself a true prophet.

The effect of that struggle upon the character as well as the reputation of Bossuet was infinitely to be deplored. During the sixteen years of his episcopate at Meaux, in his pre-occupation with intellectual and literary labour, he had allowed his spiritual nature to become less sensitive. The knowledge of that danger, which he would have termed the " pride of life," did not leave him, but he had ceased to be on the alert against it. " I tremble to the very marrow of my bones when I consider the lack of depth in myself : I am frightened at the thought of it ; nevertheless, if anyone were to suggest that I was wrong in anything I should defend myself with any number of arguments. Ah ! when will God be my sole desire ? " So had he written when he was tutor to the Dauphin, but a long space had intervened and he had learnt to convince himself that the assertion of his will was not an expression of personal desire but a part of the peculiar responsibility of his vocation. " He had made himself Pope in France "—wrote

* *Revue Bossuet* (October 1902).

Chanterac—" and having denied the infallibility of the Pope in Rome he claims recognition of that quality in himself from all the world."*

That was a venomous saying, the more poisoned because it held a strong element of truth. Moreover, as he yielded to the excitement of the duel, self-glorification of a kind from which he had always been exempt, possessed him. " You can form no idea of the sensation my ' Relation ' has produced "—that is the note of his† comments on his own productions. The detachment that had hitherto distinguished him vanished, and with it went the habit of temperate statement and Christian tolerance that had won him the respect of his Protestant opponents. " M. de Cambrai is proud to a terrifying degree."‡ " He continues in the most arrogant way in the world to pretend to be submissive."§ " He is a man without any restraints or any scruples."‖ So in successive stages we can watch the old man's hatred of his foe, urged on by the waspish suggestion of his nephew, increase in vehemence until it reached the heat that glows from the latter pages of his *Relation sur le Quiétisme*. Hatred blinded him. All his life he had maintained a sense of fitness in his conduct before the world, sometimes he may have been pompous, but he never failed in dignity ; it was only when the spirit of personal rancour, having surprised his vigilance, possessed him, that act and deed were unworthy of his fame.

The controversy slipped further and further away from its original theme and grew more and more artificial as time went on. The Jesuits, while they were no advocates of Quietism, were predisposed to support a cause whose success would entail the discomfiture of Bossuet, and at the opening of the dispute all the influence of Père La Chaise was on the side of Fénelon. Yet, despite the talk in Paris and in Rome of the Jesuit hostility to the three bishops, the House of the Society

* January 4, 1698. *Correspondance de Fénelon*, vol. viii, p. 309.
† *Correspondance*, vol. x, No. 1721 ; vol. xi, No. 1855.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. viii, No. 1539.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. ix, No. 1599. ‖ *Ibid.*, vol. x, No. 1782.

in the Rue St. Antoine was not unanimous. Père Bourdaloue condemned Madame Guyon, and Père de La Rue—a popular preacher at the moment—went even further and denounced the Archbishop of Cambrai in a sermon before the Court. The sequel to that sermon, in relation to the state of public taste and opinion at that moment, has great significance.*

Père de La Rue was to preach a panegyric of St. Bernard at the Church of Les Feuillants, and tradition says that he composed his discourse under the eye of the Bishop of Meaux. Certain it is that Bossuet, having dined with the Archbishop of Paris at Conflans, returned to Paris in time to drive the preacher in his coach to church and to have a place among his auditors. The allusions to the burning topic of the day were undisguised. There was a parallel between Bossuet and St. Bernard, and to Fénelon was allotted the part of Abelard. It may have been good policy for Bossuet to impress upon the Paris gossips that he was not at variance with the Jesuits, yet in that hour wherein he sat complacently to hear praise heaped upon himself and scorn upon his rival, he did more violence to his own dignity and reputation than his enemies had ever compassed.†

His intellect, sharpened by anger, had never shown itself more brilliant than in the closing months of the long struggle. There is work of his in the swift interchange that succeeded the publication of his record of Quietism which suggests Pascal, and it was accomplished in defiance of the strain that Fénelon's astounding genius had imposed upon him. Nevertheless, the balanced judgment that had distinguished his maturity was his no longer. His conviction of the goodness of his cause possessed his brain to the exclusion of every other thought until those who most revered him marvelled at the strange perversion of his natural kindliness. We have the verdict of his friend and admirer, the Abbé Fleury, on the whole melancholy history : " Monseigneur de Meaux did allow his temper to get the better of him,"

* Chérot : *Le Quiétisme en Bourgogne et à Paris*, p. 35.

† See *Correspondance*, vol. x, appendix ii, p. 421, *note*.

he said. "His motives were above reproach, and any suggestions to the contrary, when so great and good a man is concerned, are unpardonable. But perhaps the violence of his feelings carried him further than he intended. Why was it necessary to write so much? Why not have been satisfied when he had denounced the book on *Les Maximes?* Why have declared at Marly that the heresy of Monseigneur de Cambrai was on a par with that of Luther? Why have used so much urgency with Rome? If it had not been for the pressure exerted by the King and Monseigneur de Meaux the book would never have been condemned."*

One sentence from a confidential letter gives Bossuet's reply to such interrogations: "Pray for the Church, for the purity of truth is endangered by the strongest conspiracy that was ever known."†

* *Correspondance de M. de Saint-Fonds et du Président Dugas*, vol. i, pp. vi, viii.

† *Correspondance*, vol. ix, No. 1647 (February 18, 1698).

Chapter XXII. *The Mysticism of Bossuet*

THE number of English readers who are familiar with the literature of the Quietist controversy is probably small. To those who have been lured into its study, and have followed with delight the combat of two brilliant minds, the resulting impression of Bossuet is of a fierce old man, surrounded by all the accessories of his dignified vocation as scholar and ecclesiastic, yet forgetful of any other aim save that of hunting the rival who had ventured to affront him into irretrievable disgrace. It is not a pleasing picture, and it is not completely at variance with the facts. Only, the extenuating circumstances were many, not least among them being the fact of Bossuet's origin. He had a Frenchman's devotion to his native province : he came of a race that had been Burgundian for many generations and the memories of his youth clustered round Dijon ; and it was in Burgundy, and more especially in Dijon, that the new heresy bore its most poisonous fruit, dishonouring the traditions that to him were sacred.

He had, besides, in the course that he had chosen the support of those on whose opinion he set the greatest value. The Maurists of St. Germain, with all their weight of learning, declared against the new teaching. The *Correspondance* of Mabillon shows him to have followed every move of the controversy, and he sympathized with Bossuet. " The doctrine of Fénelon was far too elaborate and metaphysical for ordinary people " was the verdict of one of his correspondents, Dom Montfauçon.* And from another—his closest friend, Dom Estiennot—came that trenchant comment : " they surrender all things to the dictates of the spirit and refuse nothing to the desires of the flesh."† A plaint came also from the Carthusian Order : Le Masson, the Father-General, bemoaned the evil wrought by Madame Guyon and her dangerous imaginations among the nuns he directed,‡ and declared that the subtleties of Fénelon's

* *Revue Bossuet*, October 1903 (Bib. Nat., ff. 17701).

† Broglie, E. de : *Mabillon et la Société de St. Germain-des-Prés*, p. 303 (Bib. Nat., ff. 19644, folio 50).

‡ Bertrand : *Correspondance de M. Tronson*, vol. iii, liv. v, letter xiv.

teaching were calculated to confuse and hinder those whom God was calling to the way of prayer.* The verdict of Le Camus on *Les Maximes des Saints* was to the same effect,† and we have seen that Bossuet at all times gave special weight to the judgment of the Bishop of Grenoble. More important than all these, however, was the encouragement that reached him from La Trappe.

"I cannot understand"—wrote Armand de Rancé‡ when *Les Maximes* appeared—"how a man like Monseigneur de Cambrai could permit himself to drift into opinions that contradict the teaching of the Gospels and the tradition of Holy Church. . . . I pray that God's blessing may be on your pen, and that He will endow it with such force that every stroke may tell. God has called you to uphold the truth in these present times, monseigneur, and you have fulfilled your part to such good purpose hitherto that I am confident of your victory on this occasion also."

"More than all else I desire the confidence and sympathy of such souls as dwell near God"—Bossuet wrote to Madame d'Albert,§ when his *États d'Oraison* was on the eve of publication. But in this instance he was not indifferent to appreciation of a less edifying kind and rejoiced at the applause with which the book was hailed in the great world. "As soon as it came out everyone devoured it"—writes Saint-Simon—"not a man or woman at Court who did not take delight in reading it and exult in having read it. For a long time it continued to be the favourite topic everywhere. The King expressed his thanks to Monseigneur de Meaux publicly."‖

What wonder if such tributes confirmed the author in his belief that God had called him to his task and equipped him for it? Yet his conviction of his own integrity did not make him invulnerable to the shafts of

* Bertrand: *Correspondance de M. Tronson*, vol. iii, letter ix.
† Ingold: *Lettres de C. Le Camus*, No. 379.
‡ *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1478, and appendix iv.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. viii, No. 1481.
‖ Saint-Simon: *Mémoires*, vol. iv, p. 90.

his opponent. He winced under charges of jealousy and of hypocrisy, but the sharpest sting was conveyed in Fénelon's contemptuous assumption of his ignorance of mysticism. While he knew it to be undeserved it touched a truth. He seems to have been aware of limitations in himself that hindered spiritual advance. Yet he had no rival in knowledge of the history of the Church, and intellectually no one was better able to estimate the value of the work of the contemplative. The great moment in the religious history of Spain coincides with the revolt of Luther and the division of Europe by the Protestant heresy, and Bossuet had turned with relief from his immense study of one development to the contrasting characteristics of the other. It is to misunderstand him altogether to deny his appreciation of the Spanish mystics, although his understanding of their sufferings and triumphs and the glory of their ultimate goal was theoretical. It is true that he rarely refers to St. John of the Cross, but the omission implies knowledge rather than ignorance.* The great ascetic addressed himself to those who were already far advanced in the way of prayer. He ignores the possibility of a normal condition : the souls he has in view have achieved the experience of the contemplative, and in the mind of the neophyte his counsels are calculated to promote the strain and artificiality which Bossuet most deprecated. It was the part of St. Teresa to attempt to adapt sublime knowledge for untrained capacities, and Bossuet's debt to her is manifest in his Spiritual Letters and Instructions.

Molinos had asserted that "a theologian had less capacity for contemplation than an imbecile."† Fénelon, momentarily accepting that dangerous leadership, heaped scorn on Bossuet for ignorance and obtuseness regarding mysticism. His assumption was not in accordance with fact, however, for the knowledge and sympathy of Bossuet had enabled him to follow the mystics to the

* In his replies to Questions of Madame de La Maisonfort his reference is unsympathetic. See *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1347, Question iv.

† No. lxiv of Sixty-eight Propositions condemned by Innocent XI.

threshold of experience, and if his intellect had been less dominant his spirit might have carried him above the limit of book knowledge.

In justice to Fénelon it must be conceded that the conduct of Bossuet during the Quietism controversy did not suggest the humble spirit and surrendered will of the contemplative. It must be remembered, however, that his shortcomings were all examined by the searchlight of publicity, while the struggles and suffering of his inner life remained in shadow. Moreover, in every generation those who assume that the man of prayer is irreproachable in conduct will be doomed to disillusion. Bossuet was no hypocrite, and in his letters suggestions of prayer grow with the progress of his thought ; prayer was the background of his personal life as well as of his teaching, and, when his manifold activities and his eagerness concerning them obscured the background, the lapse was only temporary and was succeeded by remorse. He saw and acknowledged his own failure. " The words are mine, the doing hers," he wrote when Louise de La Vallière broke the chain that bound her to the world's distractions—" with every word that I speak I seem to condemn myself."

It would be easier to ascertain the true limits of the knowledge and understanding possessed by the great theologian if the whole question had not been confused by the modern jargon of mysticism. It has been said of him by a well-known writer on the subject that " all he could grasp from the writings of the Mystics were fragments of mysticism, and not mysticism itself. He was either unable or unwilling to realize any aspect in the life of the mystic which was unattainable by the ordinary Christian."* To the student of Bossuet such a statement is a very evident perversion of the truth. Mysticism is a term susceptible of varying interpretations, but in the clear and simple significance which the Church attaches to it, it represented an essential aspect of his faith. He saw himself as the champion of the Mystics whom the Church has honoured when he at-

* Delacroix, H. : *Études du Mysticisme*, p. 301.

tacked the Quietists, and there are passages in his writings which read like the warnings against himself so freely promulgated by his opponents. He is as fearful as they could be lest souls who are being drawn to God should be checked by human interference ; only his vision of the form of this human danger did not accord with theirs. " There are many even among the learned and the spiritual who would hinder simple souls and close against them a gate which the saints have held open since the early centuries of the Church." And for himself he prays for grace " to become as a little child, and be allowed to enter through this lowly gate and show the way to others."*

He is never guilty of vague expression : his " lowly gate " presented to his mind a definite image of something that resembles the way of simplicity towards which Ste. Chantal led her daughters. " The practice of meditation is very useful in its proper place," he wrote, " but it should not be regarded as the end ; for the soul that is faithful in mortification and detachment advances ordinarily to something purer and more intimate, consisting in the simple concentration of the self on that which is Divine, on God or His Perfection, or Jesus Christ or one of the Mysteries of the Faith. Putting away deliberate thought the soul maintains its quiet in readiness to receive whatever the Holy Spirit may instil ; it does little and receives much."†

" It is very important not to make too much use of the brain and not to strain imagination, but to await whatever may be given to the soul humbly and simply, yielding gently as God draws, surrendering to His Spirit. . . . The self in its inmost depths must flow towards God and His Eternal Truth. Desire must be for God and not for delight in Him ; for His Truth, not for the satisfaction of possessing it. Do not aspire to excel in prayer that you may feel yourself beloved of God ; desire only that He may draw you closer and closer into unity with Him. The highest form of prayer

* *Œuvres*, vol. vii : *Opuscules de Piété*, No. 7, art. xv.

† *Opuscules*, No. 7, art. vii.

is that which is most abandoned to the movement of the Spirit of God within the soul."*

Such passages as these (and there are many others on the same subject in Bossuet's Instructions to Religious) indicate a knowledge of mysticism which was not merely fragmentary and superficial. He had never lost the vision to which, in that long-ago Retreat at Metz before his public life began, he had seemed to draw so near, and the life of the cloister, with its needs and obligations and its infinite value to the Church, had strong claim on his sympathy. He who was friend to Armand de Rancé and guide to Louise de La Vallière can hardly have been blind to the supernatural element in life. He had a vivid conception of the ideal of the Religious and, as he saw it, it incorporated a surrender of desire that hardly fell short of the " pure love " of the mystic.

A strong testimony to the degree of his comprehension was paid by Madame de La Maisonfort, cousin of Madame Guyon. She was a Quietist by choice and a nun by compulsion, a prominent figure in the Community at Saint Cyr, and remarkable for her adoration of Fénelon in a circle where he was ordinarily adored. When, however, the atmosphere of Saint Cyr became electric with the threat of the coming storm it was to Bossuet she turned for protection.† Intercourse with Fénelon was denied her, and certain instructions which the Bishop of Meaux, in the spring of 1696, had been invited to give at Saint Cyr suggested to her the expediency of laying before him some of the doubts which were troubling her spirit. It is characteristic of the voluminous methods of the time that she confronted him with no fewer than sixty questions, many of them lengthy and involved. To each he returned a careful answer.‡ She was influenced especially by St. François de Sales and Madame de Chantal, and he enters into her difficulties with unfailing sympathy. Careful students

* *Opuscules*, No. 6.

† For her own record of her relations with Bossuet see *Correspondance*, vol. viii, appendix iii.

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1347.

of St. François de Sales will discover for themselves that his phraseology is not intended for literal interpretation and that the sense of isolated passages can be strained to dangerous effect ; and the mind of Madame de La Maisonfort was prone to fix on a phrase without its context. Bossuet was never at a loss, for his familiarity with the writings of St. François de Sales showed him how to discriminate between the spirit and the letter. Where Madame de Chantal was concerned he could not admit the existence of a difficulty ; her teaching had peculiar attraction for him, and her essential difference from Madame Guyon when, nominally, their practice and their goal were similar, made reference to her particularly welcome. The Quietists might urge that she had taught (in agreement with St. François) that the simple turning of the soul towards God was a complete fulfilment of a Christian's duty. Bossuet showed the difference between the Quietist finality—the abandonment of responsibility for the rest of life by the intention of surrender at a given moment—and the constant renewal of intention which she inculcated; also that she negatived the perilous separation of the higher and lower nature which was so destructive to morality, and dedicated not her prayer only but all that she was—Religious, mother, friend, directress—by the same act.* It would seem that he took pleasure in close analysis of the teaching that had been put forth from Annecy, knowing its worth and finding response to it within himself.

" To be lost in God is to be forgetful of self so that the heart has no place save for Him only, and to be so intent on His perfection that it is impossible to think or do anything that is wholly unworthy of Him."†

" We should imitate Jesus in submitting to be carried this way and that by events without dictating to God what is to happen in any part of our life. It is possible to have a deep and holy longing which is against the will of God, and by this you may realize the meaning of uniting with His will. We must have a definite desire for the accomplishment of God's command, and

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1347; *Reply*, 55. † *Ibid.*, 34.

then, as concerns actual events, accept what comes quite simply without renouncing personal wishes with regard to them."*

After the death of Bossuet this improvised catechism was sent to Cambrai by Madame de La Maisonfort. Her position between the two antagonists was extremely difficult, for, while her personal devotion was given irretrievably to Fénelon, her appreciation of Bossuet had begun before war was declared between them. Certainly it was greatly to her interest to remain in Bossuet's good graces, because her rebellion against the swift reversals of opinion which Madame de Maintenon dictated had entailed expulsion from the Community at Saint Cyr and deprivation of intercourse with Fénelon. Nevertheless she does not seem to have been guided by self-interest, and she gave her confidence to Bossuet because she saw that he was worthy of it. He accepted it with equal simplicity and befriended her to good purpose. She records † that he advised her to discontinue correspondence with Fénelon for a time, assuring her that so noble a nature must before long rebel against the erroneous opinions by which he was disturbed. This was at the beginning of their disagreement, and the evident sincerity of his original love and friendship for Fénelon made an impression on Madame de La Maisonfort that no subsequent events could dim. He would never soften his prohibition regarding the letters she had received from Fénelon, however. She had surrendered to him the whole series dating from December 17, 1690, to February 1695, and in spite of many petitions he retained them till his death. Subsequently they were returned to her by his secretary.‡

By her own desire she was transferred to the Visitation Convent at Meaux § when Saint Cyr closed its doors against her, and she remained there so long as she could

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1347; *Reply*, 37.

† Phelipeaux: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 176.

‡ *Revue Bossuet Supplément*, July 1909.

§ *Année Sainte de la Visitation Sainte Marie*, vol. x, p. 42, indicates difficulty of her position there.

receive the protection and guidance of Bossuet. His letters to her give convincing proof of his understanding of that Prayer of Quiet—"the prayer that of itself is absolutely Divine"*—towards which her mind was groping. That which he gave her was real guidance along the path to which she turned by instinct; it was not compulsion. "Turn away from human support and let your chief reliance be in God"—that was his counsel given with knowledge of the intricate system of constant communication and direction which the Devout Circle practised. And he showed her his vision of the vocation which she had accepted.

"You do not seem to have a very clear idea of what is meant by the perfection of the Religious Life"—he wrote to her. "There is the perfection of the end, which lies solely in the love of God. There is the perfection of the means, which are sometimes the very best when they are most opposed to natural inclinations and to the high idea of self that we are so willing to acquire. The pettiest sacrifices are very often the most painful and the most overwhelming. Whatever crushes this inward conceit, whatever breaks personal desire, prepares the soul for God."†

The standards of Madame de Chantal herself were not higher than those of Bossuet when the life of the Religious was in question. He, whose own offering was so divided, pictured a way of holiness for those whom God had called which demanded the courage and perseverance of a Trappist. His visits to the Communities in his diocese revealed to him the failure of these dedicated lives, a failure which in many instances was to be attributed to the frequency of the compulsory vocations that were so destructive to the true spirit of religion. The extreme seriousness with which he accepted his episcopal responsibility in this direction is a manifestation of that side of his nature which is ordinarily overlooked.‡ It had not been merely the Gallican bishop jealous of his authority who did battle with the magnificent Abbess of

* *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1494. † *Ibid.*, vol. vii, No. 1382.

‡ See *Année Sainte*, etc., vol. x, pp. 38–43, 537–543, and appendices.

Jouarre ; it was also the faithful Catholic jealous for the purity of the Religious Life.

The artist in him, when he addressed a gathering of nuns, conjured up the delights and the temptations of their daily lives, but the picture that served him at the moment was modified by that appreciation of their privilege which was the habitual accompaniment of his deepest thought. In the midst of the hubbub of his own existence, of the constant watchfulness and labour that his own vocation claimed, he could see the stillness of a convent cell as offering the highest opportunity of happiness. It should be "a little Paradise ; every moment that can be spent there is of value. . . . How precious are the moments which make us ready to hearken to the Voice of God speaking within ourselves ; it is when a soul is separated and entirely forgetful of all things apart from Him that God is pleased to give Himself to her."*

The obligations of the Threefold Vow were shown to the nuns of the diocese of Meaux as they had been shown to the new-born Community at Annecy seventy years earlier. Bossuet insisted on the necessity of surrender in its most searching form ; there was to be no inward clinging to anything earthly and no human affection of a kind that could hinder self-offering to God.† And from reflection and observation there was borne in upon him the conviction that the remedy for many of their spiritual ills would be found in a stricter rule of silence. From his vision of the kneeling nun presenting before God the grievous sins and sorrows of her brothers and sisters in the world—a vision that offered solid comfort to one who had intimate and sinister knowledge of the lives of his contemporaries—he was forced to turn to the reality of the chattering, tattling women whose quarrels were so often brought before him. In his disillusion he became dramatic, and the imprudent Sisters who formed his audience can hardly have remained unmoved. They were to imagine Our Lord in the convent precincts, where silence was the rule—

* *Œuvres*, vol. x : *3ième Exhortation aux Ursulines de Meaux.*

† *Ibid.* : *4ième Exhortation.*

near Him in one direction would be two little friends, and a group of three in another, whispering together secretly. And if Our Lord drew near to them, as to those other talkers on the road to Emmaus, and asked them the same question—what could their answer be? Would they be able to say that they spoke of Jesus of Nazareth? Nothing would be more unlikely! Almost always the subject of these confidences between two or three was the faults of others and the grievances of the speaker.* "These outpourings confuse the mind with reflections that are a grave hindrance to prayer. With your mind full of them you attempt to pray, and you find that you are excluded from the presence of God. You can make no advance in prayer unless you approach God with complete concentration, putting all other intercourse away."†

The celebrated Abbess of Fontevrault was of one mind with him as to this canker at the root of convent life: "All the fruit of their austerities is forfeited by their quarrelling and backbiting"‡—was her verdict on her nuns.

It is strong proof of his tolerance and self-command that he did not revolt from the infinite pettiness of the squabbles and complaints that were brought to his notice as Visitor to the several Communities of his diocese. His mind was ordinarily occupied by such great affairs that the descent into puerility where holiness should have been the rule was disconcerting, and if he had been, as his enemies averred, the victim of self-conceit, he would hardly have persisted in a part of his ministry which was so unproductive and unsatisfactory. Although unquestionably there were many moments when pride of intellect and pride of place possessed him, as an individual he never stood high in his own esteem. His response, when a penitent expressed surprise at his patience with her repeated failures, has the ring of sin-

* *Œuvres*, vol. x: *Instruction sur le Silence.*

† *Ibid.*: *Sur les Avantages de la Retraite.*

‡ Bellon: *Bossuet Directeur de Conscience*, p. 150 (*Circulaire aux Couvents*, 21 juin, 1677).

cerity : " Can I do otherwise, my daughter ? God bears with me ! "*

And if he had set enormous value on his powers and his time he would not have put himself at the disposal of individuals desiring spiritual help. There was one who had difficulty in speech itself and in all expression of thought, from whom he received a general Confession that lasted three hours, and his answer to remonstrance at such exaggerated complaisance expressed a principle which he applied in all his spiritual dealings.

" Eh ! For what purpose am I here, my daughter ? Has not this soul been bought by the Blood of Christ ; is she not as much the object of His love as is the possessor of high rank and brilliant gifts ? "†

This is not the language of pretension. As confessor and director Bossuet is never at fault in the practice of humility. Only two of his spiritual charges were of the mental calibre which could appreciate him, and it was not the brilliancy of Madame de La Maisonfort or the scholarship of Madame d'Albert that secured for them the privilege of his guidance ; it was their need and his conviction that they were entrusted to him by the Will of God. When once he was assured of that he gave unreservedly of all he had. His sense of the supernatural in all direct influence on souls was unvarying ; the desire to command was altogether lacking. " I have read and pondered over your letters—I have not yet been given an answer for you. The direction of souls is a mystery, and it is needful that God should be working in it on both sides. I strive to be faithful in passing on what is given to me ; when I seem to have received nothing I yield the whole to God and beseech Him to compensate for my deficiencies."‡

That thought appears repeatedly. The world has judged him by the veneer of arrogance which was assumed only before the world ; beneath it lay the spiritual diffidence of one who has studied and thought and prayed with unwavering faith through a long life. In the heat

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, appendix ii.
† *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*, vol. v, No. 698.

of controversy he boasted with justice that he was single-minded and sincere,* yet his habit of reserve proved as deceptive as deliberate hypocrisy. "His misjudgment of me"—wrote Madame Guyon—"was only the result of his ignorance of the mystic authors whose works he had never read, and of his own dearth of experience of the interior life."† She and many others believed that statement to be a fair presentation of the truth ; in fact, they were deceived by his habitual abstinence from those exuberant expressions in which the Quietists indulged so freely. Their contempt did not disturb his practice of reserve, however. "Let them say what they like about my ignorance of the interior life," he wrote to Madame d'Albert,‡ "it is by pretending to know too much that one misleads oneself and others."

The writings which were not intended for the world are Bossuet's defence against this charge of ignorance which the world was so ready to accept. They were the fruit of his many Retreats at La Trappe, and of the days of solitude which might sometimes be achieved at Germigny, and it may be presumed that if they had been communicated to the Devout Circle at Versailles, by whom he was definitely ostracized,§ its unanimity of condemnation might have been disturbed. There are passages in a meditation on Mary Magdalene that are peculiarly illuminating with regard to this hidden mind of the great thinker. As we read them the controversialist is overshadowed by the mystic.‖

"But one thing is needful : those sacred words for all their gentleness come as a thunderbolt to devastate the soul. . . . O God ! who shall declare the terrors of the summons that those words contain ? They condemn the soul to the solitude and deprivation from which the

* *Relation sur le Quiétisme*, section vi, part v.

† Madame Guyon : *Vie par elle-même*, part iii, ch. xiv.

‡ *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1550.

§ "*M. de Chevreuse tourne la tête quand il me rencontre, je n'en suis pas moins son ami et son serviteur*" (*Correspondance*, vol. x, No. 1718).

‖ MS. discovered and published by l'Abbé Joseph Bonnet 1909, from Bib. Imp., St. Petersburg. Authenticity recognized. See *Revue Bossuet Supplément*, June 1911.

flesh revolts, for this one thing means annihilation. . . . Thus deprived, and with all that was superfluous destroyed, the one thing needful takes possession of the soul with overwhelming force. Even so did this sentence do its work in the heart of Mary Magdalene. Its meaning came to her first as a thunderbolt; overturning and consuming all but one sole desire, and then from that emptiness aspiring towards the one thing needful she was uplifted and absorbed by it completely. Thus was Mary Magdalene bound heart to heart to Jesus. Thenceforward she had no life apart from Jesus, and why should we wonder if she followed where He went in His journeys, in His sufferings, and even in the terrors of His Sepulchre?"

"What is your aim, O Jesus, in claiming hearts so irresistibly, in making them so utterly your own and then withdrawing from them without warning? This is the way that Christ deals with us: His ordinary method. He draws souls to Himself, He gives them a hunger that cannot be satisfied, He wins them, masters them, binds them, He holds them so intimately that they have no life apart from Him, and when they are chained and all escape impossible He withdraws Himself, He vanishes, and tests them by the most dreadful desolation. . . . What sayest thou, Madeleine, to Jesus, thy beloved? Dost thou think thyself deceived? Ah, no! He does not deceive us, or if He does so it is not that He deserts us, but that He makes us more intimately His at just that moment when we are most conscious of being alienated from Him. Thus must love be dealt with during our pilgrimage. It must feed on faith and live only by hope; it must grow in loneliness and the most overwhelming desolation, for it is needful not only that the self should die, but also that it should die as the martyr of Jesus Christ Himself: that its own longings should be its death wounds."

In language and in thought alike this is unquestionably the work of one who understands the mystic vision, to whom, indeed, it is so familiar that suggestion is not elaborated. When he speaks most from the heart he is most insistent

on the Prayer of Quiet, on the avoidance of fixed subjects and methods, on silent waiting for a whisper of the Voice of God. "The peace of which you are conscious comes from God, but because neither it nor the tumult which is contrary to it is God Himself you must rise above both one and the other. You must seek God because He is what He is. This calm that has mastered and possessed your heart after such violent tempests, this adoration of God in silence, is the first essential for a Christian. It is our shame that we go so far afield before we come to it. You give perpetual offence to God by your impatience. You must accept your lack of patience; patience is no substitute for love. To grasp the meaning of privation and the Cross signifies more than to be patient and to be mistress of yourself. There are occasions when there is more danger in too much virtue, too much confidence, too much correctness—than in too little."

Thus Bossuet to a penitent of whose identity we have no knowledge, but whose need is not peculiar to herself.* She had craved direction in the detail as well as in the theory of prayer, and he was always ready to begin at the beginning. "We have not control over the state of our mind, still less over the follies of our imagination, still less again over the assaults of the Evil One; but we can regulate our time and our patience and the disposition of our bodies, and that is sufficient for us, or rather it is sufficient as a foundation on which to build.

"Set apart a certain amount of time morning and evening, whether the mind be filled with God or not, doing so with no other object than the adoration which is the duty of His creature. Adore Him with all the capacity you have, yet without anxiety as to the degree of your success or of your love, as to whether you are concentrated on God or on yourself, whether your time is profitable or wasted.

"You must not say: It is more worth while to fight against evil, to confess my sins, etc. There should be

* Pamphlet in writing of Bossuet entitled *Oraison*, Bâle Library (G21/36, Briefe Franz. Celebritäten). See *Revue Bossuet*, December 1906.

no confusion among the obligations of Christian life, and this one which has direct relationship to God is apart from all others and independent of them.

" You must not say that you have not passed through the stages of prayer which should precede this one. There is no question now of stages of prayer. We are concerned only with adoring God without any motive save that we are in duty bound to do so, without any desire save to offer adoration or, if we fail in this, to accept failure with patience and humility. . . . The value of our prayer depends on the degree to which we die to self in offering it. There is no place for calculations and precautions. Strive to adore and let that be sufficient for you ! Nevertheless, if it should come to pass that God accepted your adoration, your surrender, and your heart was transformed by perfect love and penetrated by truth and light, then yield yourself completely without reflection, without regard of self."

Once more we approach that vision which to him, with his restless brain and active nature, remained a vision only. He was lavish with time and thought to the humblest of the nuns who sought his help, because for any one of them life offered the opportunity which was beyond his reach. Perhaps it may be said of him that he became entangled by his vocation, for even the silence of thought, essential to the man who would listen for the Voice of God, is hard to achieve in the midst of unremitting intellectual labour. And Bossuet had knowledge of that silence ; he could describe it and desire it ; only he gave himself so ardently to his manifold activities that he had no time to foster such desires. Perhaps such intellectual eagerness as his checks the complete development of spiritual capacity, certainly there are indications that for him the Promised Land of those who pray grew less and less accessible as old age approached. The impression that he left with his contemporaries, and which has survived him, was the natural result of the way of life that he accepted. He had scope for his great capacities, and his intellectual triumphs are unquestioned : the eminent ecclesiastic, wise in his own conceit, intolerant of con-

tradiction, maintained—and still maintains—his stand before the world.

It is only in the light of his rare devotional writings that he reveals himself in another and a less familiar guise. Whether the background be Meaux or Germigny or Paris the majestic figure of tradition fades, and in its stead we see a lonely scholar, intent upon his task of confuting error and setting forth the truth, yet conscious, as he pored over his books and manuscripts, that all his triumphs had left him empty-handed.

Chapter XXIII. *The Nun of Jouarre*

THE knowledge of Bossuet that comes to us through the convents in his diocese is peculiarly valuable because it differs so materially from the familiar records of him. The kindly counsellor revealed in letters and addresses to the nuns of Meaux has few points of similarity with the aggressive being depicted by the followers of Fénelon, or even with the oracle to whom all students of theology deferred. The nuns themselves are for the most part shadowy figures ; it is only here and there that one stands out among them. Chief of these, as entrusted with a mission which none of her Sisters shared, was Henriette d'Albert, the nun of Jouarre.*

We have seen her already supporting episcopal authority against the abbess of her convent, and on this account she had some claim to her special place in Bossuet's regard. He did not accord it merely out of gratitude, however ; it is quite evident that there was an intellectual affinity between them and that she could give him a response for which he sought in vain elsewhere. She was a scholar, and possessed such remarkable mental and spiritual gifts in addition to her learning that Bossuet desired her opinion on some of his writings, and expressed satisfaction when her views regarding the life of devotion accorded with his own. He was her director ; nevertheless, his share in their correspondence is not representative of his spiritual letters—his own personality is reflected in them and constantly the desire for self-expression is apparent.

The first of his letters to her which has survived was written in March 1690, and their correspondence continued till her death nine years later. No judgment of Bossuet can be formed with any pretence at justice if study of those letters be omitted, and Madame d'Albert, by virtue of her relation to him, becomes an important person. No one made sharper demand upon his patience ; the fact that he recognized in her an intelligence of no common order can only have aggravated

* See *Correspondance*, vol. iv, pp. 64, 65, *note*.

the annoyance of her scruples and exaggerated introspection, yet he grudged no sacrifice of leisure when there was question of her peace of mind.

It is evident, and Bossuet must have been the first to realize it, that the failings to be deplored in Madame d'Albert were the direct result of her training at Port Royal. The education of the children entrusted to La Mère Angélique Arnauld prepared them for the Religious Life as she understood it, and it was not a good preparation for any other vocation. At fourteen, when she was thoroughly imbued with the sombre tenets of her instructors, Henriette d'Albert was banished from the only home she knew by the royal edict which withdrew pupils and postulants from the care of the refractory Community. She found a haven at Jouarre, but it was difficult to transpose the principles of loyalty and obedience learnt under the Arnaulds to suit the requirements of Madame de Lorraine. Nevertheless, three years later, in 1664, she and her sister, Madame de Luynes, were received into the Noviciate, and at the ceremony of Clothing her father invited the Abbé Bossuet to preach the sermon. Of the period that succeeded there is no record. She emerges again from the obscurity that should shroud the life of the true Religious when the battle between their abbess and their bishop won unenviable notoriety for the nuns of Jouarre. Probably the twenty-six years that lay behind her had been years of tension. The tradition of Port Royal was part of her being, and she was of the fibre that could have grown in holiness under the rigorous demands of the Arnauld discipline. For her the laxity of Jouarre must have entailed spiritual miseries of the most poignant kind, yet to seek relief from them was to offend against the spirit of obedience. As we have seen, Bossuet waited for the propitious moment before he struck at the false authority which made mockery of the Threefold Vow, and his observations during the interval showed him how hardly Fate had dealt with the nun of Jouarre. It was well for her that his close knowledge of Port Royal, and the ideals it represented to those who came within its orbit,

was unmarred by prejudice. Because he had acknowledged the purity of those ideals, even while he was striving to curb the arrogance that brought them into obloquy, he was the helper most fitted to calm the fever of uncertainty which had been draining strength and courage from Henriette d'Albert for so many years.

It is worth while to consider this woman and her lot. It can hardly be said of her that she renounced the world on the day of her Profession, for she had never known the meaning of its allurements, and she had been nearer to the life of the cloister in her schoolgirl days than in the Community to which she gave obedience. The confessors of the convent aided and encouraged the abbess in her irregular practices, and were quite unfitted to guide the upward aspirations of a soul desiring perfection. Madame d'Albert, by nature sensitive to the point of morbidness, was isolated in the midst of the Community by just those standards and desires which seemed to her to be the reason of her being. The travesty of a holy thing which was presented by the habits of the aristocratic Communities outraged reason as much as conscience, and the earlier period of her life in religion must have contained many moments of despair. For Madame de Luynes, whose antecedents were identical with those of Madame d'Albert, there was always possibility of consolation in the thought of a day when she should herself attain to the position of authority natural to her rank.* This was her dearest hope, and the only impediment to its fulfilment was the prejudice against her Jansenist upbringing. No such prospect suggested alleviation of present suffering to the younger sister, however ; for her the years that stretched ahead were likely to be as desolate as those behind.

And then when she was forty-two her whole life was altered by the intervention of Bossuet. She knew him as the Bishop of the diocese, and revered him as a master-craftsman in the field of letters and the greatest scholar of his day, but her despondent temperament would not, assuredly, have permitted her to dream that he would

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 977, and *notes*.

make her his especial charge and give to her such a measure of his confidence as had never before been bestowed upon a woman. She had borne the burden of an unfulfilled vocation : a pain that is not less great because the world accords to it no recognition. Bossuet restored to her the vitality that was gradually fading, and by his vigorous dealing with the affairs of the Community he gave her the background against which she could develop the aspirations that had been hers from childhood. Yet to the end her history is the record of a thwarted nature, for the check upon development was not entirely removed when the Bishop of Meaux interrupted the aimless laxity of the routine at Jouarre. That incident marked the opening of another chapter which was to contain her great discovery of intellectual friendship and with it a new experience in suffering. Bossuet, the great scholar, descried in her a mentality capable of answering to his own ; she stood out from among the many groups of Religious with whom his office brought him into contact, and he did not hesitate to show her that with him she held a place apart. Her response was the display of powers of understanding that had been dormant, but, even by their use, she woke to new possibilities of self-suspicion. The thought of him possessed her. She had reached middle life untouched by any individual influence, and he, by his condition and his age (he was sixty-two when their correspondence began), disarmed misgivings. Yet the scruples fostered by her Port Royal training could not be stilled. She feared the warm delight of human sympathy, and made a torment of that which might have been the consolation of her closing years. Her enquiries as to the possibility of sin in her attachment to Bossuet were constantly reiterated, although his replies conveyed unfaltering assurance that any comfort she could derive from him was a gift to her from God. He himself found solace from perplexity and labour in their intercourse, and he turned to it in the midst of combatting Jurieu and Protestantism, or Fénelon and his Quietist supporters. When he cast a thought towards

Jouarre, as he bent over his books at Meaux or Germigny or in his library in Paris, no flash of intuition revealed to him his own significance among the forces that had made experience for Henriette d'Albert. The business of his life had left no space for study of the character of women, and he was disposed to assume in others a simplicity equal to his own. His commentary on himself, when Madame Guyon was in question, reveals this inherent quality of guilelessness.

"It is too much to say that my penetration is too keen to be defied," he wrote to Madame d'Albert; "you cannot say more than that I am cautious and try to be on my guard against any trickery that can be employed. One may be as much misled by not believing enough as by believing too much."*

Yet Madame Guyon managed to set his boasted caution at nought and to deceive him endlessly. He was not less blind concerning Madame d'Albert. And so in leisure hours, especially at Germigny, writing to her became a pleasant habit indulged without misgiving. He tells her of his literary plans, he asks her opinion and advice, he sends her his books, he even desires her assistance in the guidance of one of his spiritual charges, Madame Cornuau, with whom she was intimate, and is ready to defer to her counsels.† In the early days of their friendship he refers to his affection in such terms as these: "The question now is not of my need of your help"—she was gathering information that he needed—"you yourself are dear to me, and it is God who has given us this friendship."‡ Further he assures her that her letters never weary him however long they may be;§ and as it is plain that they were often of portentous length this assurance should be given its full weight as evidence of friendship.

The warmth of his feeling was obvious, and he meant that it should be so. Yet it was hard for her to believe that she was cherished as friend and confidante by the greatest thinker of the day: so hard that she needed

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1249.
† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 989.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. iv, No. 646.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. v, No. 701.

constant reassurance, while he, having once established a compact of confidence between them, was puzzled beyond measure when she lamented his withdrawal from it and plied him with questions as to his sentiments towards her.

"I wish greatly, my daughter, that you would grasp once and for all that I am not changeable towards my friends, and less so towards you than anyone in the world . . . there are times, however, when I acknowledge that it is difficult for me to write"*—from such remonstrances we learn how far Henriette d'Albert fell short of his ideal of the friend by whom his declining years might have been cheered. Her ineradicable self-consciousness could not accept his simplicity, and her sense of her own failure in this respect was not the least part of her suffering. Neither of these two, however, would have regarded the happiness of human intercourse as an object in itself. If it had been possible for Madame d'Albert to be satisfied she would have found reason for alarm in the sense of satisfaction, while Bossuet, when the solace of friendship failed him, returned with undiminished zest to the intellectual labour from which it was only a transient distraction. Therefore his theory that a Divine purpose lay behind their intimacy, and that there was a mutual obligation between them, was not disturbed by the incompleteness of their understanding.

Even the close study of his sermons hardly prepares us for the deep spirituality of some of his letters of direction. He attributed all that was precious in his personal teaching to inspiration: "That which I say to you does not imply that I possess the penetration regarding the purposes of God which you attribute to me. It is enough for me that at the moment when the souls of which He has given me charge have need He enriches my poverty for them, and most especially for yours."† "Concerning that which you remember I said to you about the close association of confidence and love I wish I was able to repeat it, but such things

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 1148. † *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1157.

as these pass from me altogether. They seem to be given to meet the particular moment, and at the moment I give what I have received. The foundation remains with me always, but these testimonies leave no trace when they are made. I cannot go back on them if I would."* "As to my own conditions there is little to be said save that by my office I am a channel which carries enlightenment to others, and I have grave reason to fear that I am that and no more. But at least one must pass on and spread that which one has been given so far as is possible, and strive to make some drop of it one's own."†

This was no transient theory ; in long-past dealings with Bellefonds the same thought had possessed him. The self-confident theologian became diffident and awe-struck before the responsibility of that charge which seemed to him directly and essentially supernatural. However much she may have suffered Henriette d'Albert was supremely fortunate, for the guidance she received, in difficult years when mind and spirit were moved with crowding thoughts and longings, could hardly, under human limitations, have been more clearly of Divine infusion. Her pilgrimage, although it seemed to her so isolated, was along a path that many other feet have trod, for, when she emerged from the maze of difficulty in which the spirit of a lax Community involved her, the first exhilaration over her deliverance was clouded almost at once by the mysterious shadows of which aspiring souls, and these only, have knowledge.

It seemed to her that as she sprang forward seeking certainty of God's abiding Presence she met the Devil, and that he laid violent hands on her. She believed the experience to be individual to herself, and that it revealed a moral obliquity of which, in the flat indifference of the years that lay behind, she had had no inkling. Bossuet when he touched a question never left it till he had gone to its root. The pressure of many occupations was not too great for him to give himself to the task of healing

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 614, and vol. xii, No. 1966.

† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1137.

this sickness in the soul with which God had charged him. He placed himself beside Henriette d'Albert and brought the calmness of his mind to still the feverish distress of hers.

"As regards these miseries," he wrote to her, "I suspect that your condition of nerves is much concerned with them, and that it is being used by God for His own ends and also by the powers of evil for theirs. God tests you, brings you into subjection, forces you to recognize and to experience your own lack of power that the overwhelming power of His Grace may triumph in your heart. On the other hand the Evil One tempts you to indolence and to despair. Refuse everything except the knowledge of your own nothingness and go forward hoping against hope!"* It was not his method to underrate her trials, but rather to secure the utilizing of them. "I do not desire that you should covet suffering"—he said, reverting to the Port Royal ideals and phraseology—"all that I ask is that you should submit to the Will of God by which it comes to you."† This idea of the Will of God even in temptation and distress was the keynote of his instructions to her; it counteracted the terrors with which Jansenist doctrine had imbued her and taught her that love burnt at its brightest behind the shadows that seemed most impenetrable. "We must not try and regulate the species of discipline which it may please God to impose upon His servants; we must yield ourselves to His Hands that He may imprint the Cross of Our Lord upon us in whatever form He pleases. And we need not trouble to discriminate between the results of our own weakness or the expression of His Will, because, if the first and most likely explanation be correct, it is none the less true that God can fulfil His purpose by using means which were not of His inspiration. He holds all things in His Hands, even our follies and our desire of evil and our sins themselves. He can mould it all to serve towards our salvation."‡

This was not teaching that Bossuet could have applied

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 582.

† *Ibid.*, vol. vii, No. 1249. ‡ *Ibid.*, vol. v, No. 738.

to general use ; it was susceptible of twisting into a semblance of that doctrine which he most abhorred, for the Quietist declared that his sin was no contradiction of his complete surrender to the Will of God. But Henriette d'Albert ran no risk from Quietist allurement ; her nature was utterly devoid of self-complacency, and the direction she received was for herself alone, there was nothing stereotyped about it. The work of such suspected writers as Malaval on the one hand, and Saint Cyran on the other, was innocuous for her.* The wider the field permitted to her thought the greater was her chance of spiritual and mental health, and she had good reason to be thankful that, at a period when prejudice and narrow judgment ruled the system of direction, she found a guide who recognized her need of special treatment and could relax accepted rules for the formation of a good Religious. The sense of his Divine commission shows itself at many differing points in the career of Bossuet, but never more plainly than in his relation to Madame d'Albert. At those moments when he is confident that God is using him for her he demands absolute trust, and he arrogates to himself the most complete authority. "The time has come when it is necessary that you should trust yourself to me entirely," he told her in 1694, and he exhorts her to conceal nothing from him that he may help her to fulfil whatever God demands of her.† His insistence is characteristic. His acceptance of her as a charge from God had the same completeness as if it concerned the undertaking of an intricate controversy. He could not consent that any knowledge of her spiritual state should remain outside his grasp.

It is not likely that he foresaw the degree to which she would test his patience. To him a decision once given precluded need for repetition, while she went back again and again to her starting-point. He never seems to have failed her, however, and it is only now and then that there is a note of severity, a clear injunction that

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, Nos. 1219, 1224.

† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 989.

certain questions must not be asked again nor the sense of their replies evaded : " Always understand that when I give you a decision I am forbidding what is contrary to it."* " You give yourself needless distress by saying that I do not answer you on certain points. The answer lies in the principles I give you and you must find it for yourself. It is often desirable to resort to this method of answering because a soul can learn by it to seek Eternal Truth within herself ; that is to say, to listen for its verdict."† But his attempt to enforce discipline and to ignore the repetition of questions when sufficient response had once been given collapsed before the distress that severity evoked in Madame d'Albert, and rebuke faded into mild remonstrance at the waste of time which each might have been using to far better purpose. He made his endeavour ‡ to temper sympathy with firmness because the free indulgence of her scrupulosity entailed grave risk of ever-recurring miseries, and failed altogether to understand the difficulties by which their intercourse was entangled ; yet the dilemma was part of the responsibility he had accepted. " Perhaps God sends you these perpetual questionings as a test of your patience and of mine "§—he wrote, giving simple application to his theory of " the Invisible Hand that is guiding all things and works through the temperament of each of us to lead us wherever we are to go."‖

And all that stood for failure in the temperament of Henriette d'Albert does seem to have been of profit to Bossuet. She knew an intimate agony of soul which was outside his personal experience, and his appreciation of its reality and its importance only came to him by his endeavour to comprehend the difficulties that claimed solution before he attempted to give guidance. His own habit of spiritual reserve did not facilitate such comprehension, and he could never bring himself to approve the self-scrutiny she practised : " Above all, avoid the fashion of seeking to discover what stage you have reached

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 610.
† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 939.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1014.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1056.
‖ *Ibid.*, vol. v, No. 713.

in prayer. I do not approve of the plan of seeking to mark out each step and of making rules for God to show Him what ought to happen as each one is reached, saying : ' this is the mark of such and such a stage.' Secret presumption is at work in this, and self-love runs riot. For my part I hold that God may put a very perfect soul back to the alphabet of prayer without its suffering loss, and advance another to perfection while it thinks itself entangled in its earliest hindrances."*

This is wise counsel, and its giver may have learnt as much in the reflection that produced it—reflection foreign to his ordinary lines of thought—as did its recipient. Theologian and student of human nature though he was, he never learned that his own simplicity was not the invariable complement of sincere devotion until the soul of Henriette d'Albert was laid bare before him.

" Do not try to discover if God is satisfied with you, my daughter ; that is a secret which He does not reveal." " Do not allow yourself to reflect on the kind of grace bestowed upon you . . . the more you free yourself from such inquiry the better ; you cannot give yourself too freely to the leading of the Holy Spirit who prays in you as He wills and not as you intend "†—to him such obvious truths needed no saying, but her anxious questioning required their constant repetition.

Although she had no Quietist proclivities she gave him new knowledge of the aspiring souls to whom Quietism was so grave a peril, and some of his letters to her show him engaged in puzzled study of this science of introspection which to Fénelon was as second nature. One sentence held his rule for the spiritual life : " It is enough if one's whole heart can say ' My God, I love what Thou lovest and I renounce all that is not pleasing to Thee,"‡ and it was by that standard that he judged himself to have failed. His sense of his own continual shortcomings was shown in his frank acknowledgment

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 1127 (*see* also to Madame Cornuau, vol. iv, No. 541).

† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, Nos. 1067, 1013. ‡ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 975.

that the difficulty felt by many a good Religious in finding subject for Confession had never come within his personal experience.*

There were moments, however, when Madame d'Albert succeeded in enticing him into the self-dissection which was her delight. He yielded under protest, but he did yield. "I do not know why you should wish to know these things; there is no use in knowing them," he wrote, but before such a letter ends he is endeavouring to satisfy her curiosity—"you are right in guessing that I have been given infinite longing for the virtue that you speak of—so much so that it appears to me to be the true foundation of sanctity; but it is one thing to long for it and quite another to make it my own in the measure that God requires of me."†

Even to her he gave this type of confidence very rarely, yet by her speculations she did contrive to force denial or acknowledgment. "It is true that my idea of poverty, inward and outward, is so high that I feel my love for it to be as my love for Jesus Christ. All that I have seems to be merely borrowed, and all that suggests advancement only shows me the complete emptiness of my natural self. And how can I hope to be satisfied or ever to escape from vacancy so long as I am content to snatch at shadows with eager hand and gaping mouth?"‡ Perhaps it was salutary to be forced by her insistence and his native honesty to reveal the severance between his vision and his practice. Many years earlier he had recognized his capacity to guide where he could not follow, and in those intimate communings of his later life his self-arraignment became more direct.

"It is the last beatitude that stands for perfection and on which Our Lord was most insistent . . . to grow pure the soul must pass through the fire of suffering. Alas, I have not the courage for it. Pray that God will give it to me."§

His candour did not lower him in the esteem of Henriette d'Albert or lessen her deference to his direc-

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 621.
† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1102.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1114.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. iv, No. 649.

tion. He saw in her the capacity for sanctity, and for her he visualized conditions that were beyond his own endeavour. The isolation essential to the mystic had been clear to his imagination forty years earlier, and it grew clear to him again; only experience had shown him dangers that were not patent to his early musings. "Silence and withdrawal are necessary for the prayer of contemplation, but if withdrawal was meant to keep us fixed on the thought of God within ourselves Jesus Christ would not have called on us to say daily 'Our Father, which art in Heaven.'"*

That is the caution of the practised theologian to whom the vague phrases of the pious were intolerable, and Madame d'Albert benefited by the quality in Bossuet which alienated Madame Guyon. She had the scholarly instinct that responds with confidence to the truth conveyed in justly measured words, and his spiritual direction aided the development of her richly gifted mind. In the last ten years of her life she lived anew; she had a mission towards the learned bishop, the great celebrity, and the imperfections of her manner of fulfilling it did not lessen its importance. For her own peace, and possibly for her full spiritual growth, he impressed himself too much upon her. (And here comparison with François de Sales is unavoidable, and we are reminded of the wide gulf that divides the intellectual from the saint.) The director of Henriette d'Albert was, as he so constantly averred, the channel rather than the depository of grace, and the disturbance which undoubtedly he brought to her was due to the domination of his mind over hers. It was to her capacity for intellectual response that she owed his friendship, but if he had concerned himself only with her soul perhaps her debt to him would have been greater. The letters she received from him in 1698, when he was distracted by the anxiety of the Quietism controversy, leave no doubt as to the consolation her sympathy afforded him. In this she had reason to esteem herself supremely favoured. The true mystic

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 939.

has no need of favour, however, and surrenders earthly friendship without dismay, and we cannot judge of the real spiritual capacities of Madame d'Albert because she was never subjected to the test of deprivation. In 1699 she died.

Chapter XXIV. *Bossuet the Director*

ONE of the melancholy results of the Quietism controversy is the fashion of contrasting Bossuet and Fénelon, and of assuming that where the one succeeded the other was of necessity a failure. The Dauphin's tutor would be judged far less severely if the Duke of Burgundy had not responded so readily to discipline ; and more might be known of the quiet work of the Bishop of Meaux as a director of souls if the fame of the Archbishop of Cambrai in that capacity had been less world-wide.

The Fénelon of tradition is interpreted by his spiritual letters ; his personal impress is upon each one, while the counsels of Bossuet to his penitents reveal the individual to whom they are addressed and the capacity for self-repression in the director rather than his personality. The Spiritual Letters of Fénelon are among the classics of devotional literature while those of Bossuet are overlooked, and by this fact alone the inferiority of Bossuet's method is proved beyond dispute. Nevertheless his work as a director, in its relation to his character and its contrast to the work of Fénelon, demands particular attention. The divergence of their respective theories is evident. Fénelon claimed implicit obedience to a system ; it was one which accorded with his own sentiments, and which evoked admiration from persons of great spiritual capacity ; he applied it unvaryingly to all who appealed to him, and his letters have enshrined it for the benefit of succeeding generations. He was credited with possessing a panacea for every spiritual ill ; he had only one, however, and to obtain it it was necessary to place unwavering trust in a physician who never altered or adapted his treatment to differing temperaments. The method justified itself, for Fénelon had no rival as a spiritual guide. His success suggests that his insistence on absolute surrender was the secret of his fascination for many of his disciples ; had he been less rigid he would not have sustained their fervour.

The attractiveness of spiritual despotism and its comparative value among spiritual forces is a theme for the

psychologist, and the correspondence of Fénelon should be of assistance in its study. It is curious, on the other hand, to find Bossuet, the typical autocrat in matters of Faith, approaching the office of director with diffidence. "I make no reply because God had given me nothing for you." "I must wait and see what God suggests to me." Phrases of this kind occur repeatedly in his letters to his penitents, and in his relations with them his humility is beyond question. Assuredly he had no thought that his counsels would ever be made public, but a year after his death his Letters of Direction to Madame Cornuau * were submitted to Cardinal de Noailles. The impression of the Quietism controversy was still fresh in the mind of one so intimately connected with it as the archbishop; he had good cause to remember the temporary aberration of passion and intellectual jealousy to which Bossuet had yielded, and these Letters, some of which were written during the combat, came to him as a revelation. He saw their importance in any future effort to establish the reputation of the great theologian on its true basis. "They are proof," he declared, "of the light of the interior life which this great mind received from God. So many people maintain that he was lacking in such light. This should show them their mistake."†

A mistake of this nature, however, is difficult to correct, and it is due to the Religious Houses in his diocese that the real character of Bossuet has emerged from the skilful calumnies of his enemies. The fact that his richest knowledge was only given form for the assistance of the nuns in the many convents surrounding Meaux is in itself significant.

"On the Feast of the Holy Innocents he gave us a meditation so full of the Spirit of God that we lamented all the important affairs which are depriving the world of his works of piety"‡—that is the testimony of a Superior of the Visitation in 1698 when the Quietism controversy was raging.

* See *Note* on Madame Cornuau (*Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 507).

† *Revue Bossuet*, October 1904. ‡ *Ibid.*, December 1907.

Long before that date he had begun to circulate written copies of his Instructions among the different houses under his jurisdiction. On the manuscript of his celebrated *Traité de la Concupiscence* it is noted that he wrote it at the desire of a Religious in his diocese, and the name he gave it was Considerations of Some Words of St. John. The first suggestion of his Instructions on the Sacred Mysteries and of his Meditations on the Gospels * may have come to him when he was tutor to the Dauphin, but it was the nuns of the Visitation who claimed their full development, and in the twenty years of study of his Master's teaching that intervened he had added to his discoveries. Indeed, it is hard to understand how the time-worn fable of his ignorance of mysticism can survive in face of those Meditations on the Gospels.

There is close connection between his devotional writings and his work as a director of souls, and in both he was governed by the same instinct of reserve and of austerity. He drew from the richest treasures of his thought when he wrote for the inmates of provincial convents, and he lavished his solicitude on spiritual charges with no claim on worldly importance. And here it is fair to ask whether some part at least of Fénelon's celebrity was not due to the halo of aristocracy surrounding all his penitents. Their magnificence was indeed a legitimate basis on which to build his reputation, for it was one of the privileges of greatness to command the most skilled spiritual assistance. His popularity among the pious duchesses testified to his capacity. It was characteristic of Bossuet, however, in the later years when the direction of souls made insistent claim upon his time, to ignore social significance in a spiritual relationship ; even when his ambitions were most vivid they were held in a place apart from the hidden source of his de-

* A curious instance of the strength of party spirit was given in 1731 and 1732 when the Jesuits attacked these books—then newly-published—as being unorthodox and in favour of "the heresies of Quietism and Calvinism." See *J. B. Bossuet, Évêque de Troyes : Instruction pastorale au sujet des calomnies avancées dans le "Journal de Trévoux"* (1733).

votional life. There were, no doubt, many individuals in the world and in religion who asked and obtained assistance from him during his years of ministry in Paris, yet this side of his priest's vocation had not been developed. To prove it we have the testimony of Phelipeaux that curiosity was aroused by his long interview with Madame Guyon in 1694 in the convent in the Rue Cassette, "because it had never been his custom to allow his precious time to be thus occupied."*

It is clear that his time did not become less precious as his years increased, and therefore some craving in himself must have impelled him to occupy a portion of it in tasks of personal direction. Through his penitents he could see the simple practice of the Faith and its effects, and he was weary of striving to visualize the mental outlook of the unbeliever and to disentangle the complicated webs of truth and heresy which the scholars of his day seemed to delight in spinning. His attitude of mind is best exemplified in his dealings with Marie Cornuau. The Abbé Bossuet, whose whole being was concentrated on the quest of souls in Paris, would never have accorded intimate direction to that devout widow; but the Bishop of Meaux, thirty years later, gave without stint from his wealth of knowledge and experience to the unlettered woman of the middle class who forced herself upon his notice. Her character is reflected in the letters addressed to her. Evidently she was an eager, restless being, given to small ambitions and to small calculations tending to their achievement, and she was fully alive to the value of a celebrated name, and had formed the deliberate intention of securing for herself a share in Bossuet's renown. Her nature was in sharp contrast to that of Madame d'Albert, yet a close friendship existed between them, and from this it is fair to assume that Madame Cornuau has done herself less than justice by her methods of courting publicity. Moreover, in the regard of the observant the sincerity and force of her admiration for Bossuet must counterbalance the folly of her little tricks and egotisms; and the laboured

* Phelipeaux: *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 84.

affectation of the preface she composed for her collection of his letters will not lessen the value of the book itself. Indeed, when she published these Instructions which during fourteen years she had received from Bossuet she placed a rich storehouse of wisdom at the disposal of the world.*

Marie Cornuau was born in Paris in 1653 ; at fifteen she married the bailiff of the Comte de Bellay, and was left a widow fourteen years later. She had relatives at La Ferté-sur-Jouarre, and withdrew thither with her only child. Certain devout women in that locality had united themselves under a Superior, Madame de Tanqueux, in one of the educational endeavours which were so popular among charitable persons in that period. In 1691 this experiment was absorbed in a regular Community founded by the celebrated Madame de Miramion, which had had great success in Paris.† When Madame Cornuau was enlisted among its supporters, however, its purpose and regulations were still undefined, and their incoherence supplied the new recruit with opportunity to prove her capacity for enterprise. Bossuet had just been appointed bishop of the diocese, and as soon as there was reasonable hope of attracting his notice to herself and her Community she applied to him for sanction of the rule. This was the beginning of the connection which was the joy and glory of her existence. Bold and skilful manipulation as well as patience must have been demanded before she attained the goal towards which she aspired, but she did actually construct for herself from the most unpromising materials a position of interest and importance. The process was laborious. The devout ladies of La Ferté-sur-Jouarre were not Religious and their labours were of a normal and ordinary kind ; among the many claims upon their bishop theirs cannot have assumed any special prominence, and between 1682 and 1686 Madame Cornuau did not advance very far towards the personal intercourse with celebrity which she coveted. So small was the result

* See *Correspondance*, vol. iv, appendix ii.

† See *Revue Bossuet*, June 1905.

of her first efforts that, in consonance with Bossuet's theory of the supernatural ordering of all events, she could claim that her success was not attained by individual endeavour. Indeed, the degree of her success exceeded all reasonable anticipation. It was in 1686 that the bishop's wide benevolence moved him to give Instructions to the Sisterhood, and in response to an earnest petition from La Sœur Cornuau he received her confession after a Retreat. Evidently he was quite unconscious of the immense importance that she attached to this event (had he been aware of it her plea would have been more likely to meet with a refusal), and their subsequent correspondence indicated that at the time he felt no special solicitude regarding her spiritual progress—his sympathy was more readily attracted by simpler natures. She had her part to play towards him, however, and that which her pertinacity could hardly have achieved unaided did come to pass by gradual degrees.* A few years later she was writing to him with the freedom and frequency of the privileged correspondent.

These details indicate the inherent quality of the woman to whom so large a number of Bossuet's spiritual letters are addressed, and the interest of them is enhanced by the evidence of their practical effectiveness. The nun of Torcy mourning the loss of a wise director and a kindly friend when the great bishop died was a very different person from the restless, scheming dame who had been the centre of so many petty jealousies in the lay Community at La Ferté. Her tendency to deceit always remained ; she juggled with his letters,† altering dates and representing every passage of interest she could collect from others as intended for herself ; nevertheless, she was susceptible to the impress of those deep convictions and high standards which were so much more prominent in her experience of Bossuet than eloquence or learning. "Pressing and important as were his labours, no pains were too great to expend on

* *Revue Bossuet* (1904), pp. 205–208.

† *Correspondance*, vol. iv, appendix ii.

the humble and unworthy charge that he had undertaken. . . . He said that he recognized only the seal which was set by God upon a soul, and did not regard high birth and distinction as giving added value."* Such was her enthusiastic tribute to the principle on which Bossuet accepted spiritual responsibility.

So far as her capacity allowed Marie Cornuau responded to the immense privilege accorded to her, and when it was secured she ceased to have ambitions that were separable from the devout life. The vanity that in the world finds satisfaction in small social triumphs demands, under the influence of conversion, to excel in the practice of austerity, and seeks visible methods of manifesting fervour. She began by requiring a rule that was far stricter than that of her companions; she wished to fast, to keep night watches, to use the discipline, to feel herself set apart from others by a higher call. This was the opening stage of her new venture, and Bossuet's method of dealing with it suggests his dearth of experience where this type of spiritual aspirant was concerned. At first he encouraged her eagerness and consented to her suggestions; his common sense was not long in coming to his aid, however, and he saw that direction cannot wisely be given to one of a group of women without reference to its effect on others. La Sœur Cornuau was not perhaps adverse from the discovery of her secret severities, for it is clear that such discoveries were not infrequent and caused a certain amount of sensation in the Community. Her director had too much native wisdom to put any sudden check upon her, but the tidings that reached him of her visible extravagances gave him the clue to her hidden failings. "It is not advisable that you should rise earlier than others if this, even in the smallest degree, is a cause of annoyance to your sisters. . . . Kindliness and obedience are of much deeper value than prayers and penances."† "People are disposed to imagine that

* "*Premier Avertissement pour les Lettres*" (*Correspondance*, vol. iv, appendix ii).

† *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 619.

nothing is beyond their reach if only they torment themselves sufficiently."*

Either of these observations was calculated to disturb the pleasing vision of herself which Marie Cornuau was cherishing. The heroism of getting up at dawn appealed to her imagination, while the virtue of considering the foibles of her fellow-workers presented no attraction. Bossuet, when he paused in the midst of labours that concerned the faith of millions, watched her with eager interest, and she had much to teach him. It was by his endeavour to guide her through the labyrinth of spiritual follies into which she strayed, that he learnt how to write his studies of the Sacred Mysteries so that the unlearned might realize the deepest things as being also the simplest. His penitent, aided by a vivid imagination and an undeveloped mind, discovered the pitfalls in paths that seemed to him devoid of peril. His many Instructions intended for the Religious of his diocese make provision for the tendencies of pious souls to stray into extravagance, and this element of caution is nowhere more remarkable than in the study of "The Life Hidden in God" † (written at Easter 1692), which in its small compass holds convincing proof of his understanding of the life of prayer. Plainly he was grateful for the opportunity to bring into the light the treasures he had been garnering in secret. In 1695, when he was groaning under the overwhelming pressure of other labour, he wrote to Madame d'Albert that he was working at his Instructions for the Community, and that this "involved no weariness but rather was a refreshment."‡ The sense of sympathy in those for whom he wrote was an inspiration to his hard-worked brain weary with a lifetime of contention. "Keep this letter, for some day I may want a copy of it and of my last. Sometimes I am asked for an opinion on these questions of prayer, and I know that I never reply to such good purpose as when I am dealing with those for whom God holds me answerable."§ That is clear evidence that he was conscious

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 641.
† *Œuvres*, vol. vii.
‡ *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1235.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1127.

of his own debt to those who claimed from him the deepest knowledge that he had to give. Once when the two sisters at Jouarre, whose appreciation meant so much to him, expressed their wonder at his power to inspire and convince them, he said that when he had teaching to communicate he was careful first to absorb it thoroughly himself.* He was, indeed, too learned to imagine that the time for learning could pass while life endured.

It was this grave simplicity of his that impressed and steadied that restless little egotist, La Sœur Cornuau, until her quest for novelties in penance gave place to a deeper longing, and all that was frivolous and erratic in her nature became subordinated to the great idea that took possession of her. We do not know if the suggestion of her own vocation as a Religious came to her from any human source ; certainly it was not derived from her director, who was disposed to regard it as a passing fancy. In the gradual development of her purpose, however, Marie Cornuau drew from Bossuet many letters that are full of precious teaching. It is possible that he was never convinced that the vocation of which he heard so much had absolute reality ; the Community at La Ferté gave scope for self-surrender, for humility, for the practice of obedience, and the spirit of the true Religious might have rested in it until a clear call to some other field was audible. La Sœur Cornuau spurned the idea of uniting her supernatural aspirations with her use of the conditions in which she found herself, but the wisdom of her director turned her self-assertion to good account. When she demanded " rules of perfection "—in the evident hope of an opportunity for impressive fasts and deprivations—he gave her these : " Not to regard her own concerns but rather the concerns of others—because if she followed the precept of St. Paul closely in this she would never give way to temper or yield to her own desire, but would be mindful, in all that she said and did, of the best means of bringing comfort and help to others. And for this end another reminder of St.

* Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 120.

Paul was the best incentive : ' Even Christ pleased not Himself.' "* Soaring aspirations are not easy to recall to the familiar ground of our duty to our neighbour, and the strength of Bossuet's influence over his erratic penitent is proved by her acceptance of such prosaic directions.

In sixty years of life he had learnt very little about women, and the fact that Marie Cornuau belonged to a type that is extremely common in every generation would have afforded him no help in forming his judgment of her. He approached her without prejudice, and, when she professed an overwhelming desire to enrol herself among the Poor Clares in the neighbourhood of La Trappe, he considered the suggestion in all its bearings before pronouncing it to be impracticable. At that time it did not occur to him that to dream of herself as a Poor Clare gave a tinge of romance to the monotonous routine of service that made up the life of a Sister at La Ferté. He became more enlightened as the months went by. It was in December 1691 that she began her intercourse with Jouarre, and the Sisters there with whom she had acquaintance introduced her to Madame d'Albert. Bossuet consented to her visits provided they were not entangled with petty mysteries and jealousies " such as women are apt to indulge in."† Thenceforward there were no more interludes to her periods of restlessness. The impression of stateliness at Jouarre appealed to her imagination, and, by contrast with the dignity of an ancient Order, the Community at La Ferté, with its experimental rule and constitutions, became insupportable. And thereupon the shadowy sense of vocation crystallized into a certainty that, in defiance of all reasonable possibility, she would be admitted to the companionship of the Ladies of Jouarre.

" I do not know why it is that you have such clear vision on these points while mine is so dim "—Bossuet wrote to her—" unless it be that God means to test you by giving you a great desire for which accomplishment

* *Correspondance*, vol. iv, No. 563.
† *Ibid.*, No. 664.

is not intended."* That was a favourite theory of his. "When God calls us to embark on something which He does not allow us to fulfil He confers a twofold benefit: first we are uplifted by a high desire, and afterwards we become the stronger and the humbler by His refusal of it."†

In a long life that had held its share of disappointed hopes he had tested for himself the full worth of the teaching he instilled, but it was not palatable doctrine to an eager, self-willed woman. It is plain that in his regard for La Sœur Cornuau there was no vestige of the yearning sympathy he gave to Madame d'Albert; he watched her rather with the eyes of the spiritual physician, marking symptoms, but never deviating from the principle of treatment on which he had decided. She tried his patience by her perpetual demand on his attention. "All this talking is not required to guide a soul"—he told her—"when you have said what needs saying my silence should be sufficient reassurance."‡ There was no danger, as with Madame d'Albert, of checking her too briskly; La Sœur Cornuau was irrepressible, and Bossuet with a touch of humour suggests that when she is writing one of her long letters she should put any question requiring prompt reply on a separate sheet, because the main communication is always set aside till he has ample leisure.§

Yet when she wearied him most he gave only the more generously, for he had accepted her as a charge from God, and God's work in her must needs be accomplished under his guidance. Even if she deceived herself in her wish to be a nun he regarded her suffering on account of this unaccomplished longing as having absolute reality, and he held that all suffering faithfully accepted brought benefit to a Christian soul.

"You are misled by your great desire and you create your own misfortunes,"‖ he told her when she bemoaned her disappointments. "You ask me to consider the likelihood of that which is utterly impossible. Let the

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 968. † *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1040.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. v, No. 809. § *Ibid.*, No. 740. ‖ *Ibid.*, No. 839.

matter rest. Do not think that I want to thwart you, my daughter, but I cannot bear that you should have so much distress to no purpose."* From the fruitlessness of his exhortations he concluded that her obsession was as true a part of the Divine intention for her as if her vocation to Religion had been self-evident. "In many directions your desire only brings you unhappiness; on the other hand its effect on you is that of a purifying fire which consumes your faults and restlessness, and makes you more worthy of your Lord."†

Marie Cornuau idealized herself and her imagined future, and her constant preoccupation with an ideal was useful in its effect although her vision had small relation to reality. Bossuet had the skill to turn her follies to her profit; possibly he was not aware of the full extent of them, but if some of her expressions of fervour and plans for self-torment were prompted by the desire to arrest his attention they were converted into the text for invaluable counsels. He showed her that if her love was real it would not express itself in outward act so much as in that inner surrender to the Will of God of which she had not grasped the rudiments. She might not cling even to the delight she found in prayer. "All things are transitory, that which God gives as much as the rest. He only is unchanging, and He gives and withdraws His gifts according to a law that is immutable, but is known to Him alone." "During this life we must go forward groping and ask God that during each moment we may leave our will within His grasp and be untroubled. That is what reality of love implies, my daughter." "To worship God truly is the highest vocation of all; for that assumes such perfect conformity with the Will of God that there can be nothing higher and nothing of self-will is left; without this the truth is not in us, for the truth consists in being absolutely conformed to whatever God requires of us, however unexpected it may be."‡

It was to this lesson of complete abandonment that

* *Correspondance*, vol. v, No. 825. † *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 924.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, Nos. 1059, 1029; vol. v, No. 864.

he always returned in the teaching of his later years, and it was particularly applicable to the feverish doubts and longings of La Sœur Cornuau. She had become so unsettled in her relations with her own Community by her friendship with the Ladies of Jouarre that Bossuet made interest with the Abbess and obtained permission for her to take up her abode with them. She was very anxious for the change, but it brought her no nearer to peace when it was accomplished, and her position at Jouarre was anomalous. If the benevolence of her director appears excessive the explanation is to be found in his confidence in the promise of her future, a confidence that was not disturbed by his growing comprehension of her weaknesses. He had allowed distractions, intellectual and worldly, to hamper his own endeavour after personal holiness, but there was no limit to his aspirations for the souls entrusted to his care.

Nevertheless, in spite of her personal devotion to him he failed to imbue La Sœur Cornuau with his own view regarding the vocation of all Christian souls and her vocation in particular. "There can be only one call from God to a Christian soul"—he told her—"and that is to follow wherever He leads, renouncing or receiving with equal readiness. God has an infinite number of ways by which He leads us, my daughter, and all His ways are good; it may be said even, as He is Leader, that all are of equal excellence."* In direct contradiction to these tenets she insisted on the way she had chosen for herself as the only way that could lead her to salvation, and would not accept the tranquillity which he saw to be within her reach. In the routine of practical usefulness at La Ferté she had longed to have a share in the life at Jouarre; once this was attained she was maddened by association with a condition of privilege in which she was denied full participation. She seemed to him to be bruising herself against a closed door instead of lifting the latch, but his patience with her was infinite, and he had faith that the Divine purpose would use even her obtuseness. "We understand so little of God's

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1196.

dealing with us ; it is His secret ; it is not for us to try to penetrate it ; enough that we should worship and submit. No change in circumstances, whatever the cause of it, can be a barrier that withholds the grace of God from you. In His Wisdom He may seem to leave you to yourself, a prey to temptation and despair. It is thus that the soul is taught its own feebleness in the struggle of the powers of good and evil, and the supreme strength of the power of God."*

He believed that the life of prayer was really her objective and that she was groping after the prayer of contemplation. The place he had made for her at Jouarre gave her every facility for the consecration of herself to this glorious purpose ; he had acceded to her desire for it on that account, and he was firm in refusal of her petitions to be allowed to try other experiments. In his own weariness and overwork he may well have envied her her opportunities, and when at length the door which she believed to be barred against her opened, and she made her vows as a Religious, her position as God's chosen servant seemed to him neither less nor greater than it had been before. In 1696, when Madame de Luynes became Superior of the Priory of Torcy,† Marie Cornuau was allowed to follow her from Jouarre, and two years later Bossuet preached at the ceremony of her Profession.

The astonishment (not devoid of vanity) with which she regarded the care he bestowed upon her was justified. She must have given him reiterated disappointment and never any clear reason for satisfaction in her advance. His patience with her sprang from the deep fount of humility within him which taught him to attribute her shortcomings to his own errors. His sense of these only spurred him to renewed vigilance, and his simplicity proved the best tonic for a conscience weakened, as was hers, by the disease of unreality. One of her letters has survived in which she describes her jealousy because he

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1250.

† *See* Jovy : *Études et Recherches*, Art. v, for notice preserved in Archives Nationales of Madame d'Albert and Madame Cornuau at Torcy.

wrote at greater length to Madame d'Albert than to herself: "I feel that I would rather have died than have the shame of acknowledging anything so contemptible."* His response was a recommendation to Madame d'Albert to refrain from showing his letters,† and he allowed the culprit to wait in vain for the remonstrance or rebuke which, so obviously, she desired to elicit from him. La Sœur Cornuau suffers by comparison with Madame d'Albert (so tragically sincere in the midst of morbid terrors and intricate scruples). She was, as she frequently protested, unworthy of her privilege, for she remained a successful schemer to her life's end. Yet her record at Torcy was that of a good Religious. Madame d'Albert died in her arms, and she was cherished and favoured by Madame de Luynes. Moreover, she never slackened in the exercises of devotion and austerity that she had adopted under Bossuet's direction, although the standards he had placed before her—those standards which in practice bring Heaven down to earth—remained outside the range of her endeavour. "This nun was very audacious, very insinuating and apt at flattery, and nothing daunted her." Such was the epitaph framed for her when she died by one who knew her well.‡ In fact, in the two years that had elapsed since the death of Bossuet she had wound herself into the good graces of Madame de Maintenon, had obtained a money allowance from the King and the spiritual direction of the Cardinal de Noailles. The success of her efforts § must be held to justify these strictures from Bossuet's secretary, the Abbé Ledieu.

Yet those who love the memory of Bossuet will recognize that the tribute of La Sœur Cornuau was needed to complete the record of his life of labour. Without it some characteristics, such as his independence and humorous wisdom, must have remained unknown. And her shams and insincerities were sins of tempera-

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 1151.
† *Ibid.*, vol. vii, No. 1211.
‡ Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. iii, p. 191.
§ *Correspondance*, vol. iv, appendix ii.

ment not combatted because not recognized. She was sincere in faith, in her desire for self-dedication, in her loyalty and devotion to her director. In her relations with him she played a part of which a more elevated character would have been incapable, and for the manner in which she played it every student of human nature in all subsequent generations owes her a debt of gratitude.

Chapter XXV. *Bossuet and his Vocation*

GENTLENESS was the distinguishing feature of Bossuet's system of direction ; we find him discouraging external austerities and refusing to acknowledge sin in many of the supposed offences which his penitents described to him. In this he was avowedly* the disciple of François de Sales, and the readiness with which he responded to the confidences of the devout women under his care suggests that it was a relief to allow himself to be tender and indulgent. Indeed, he was by nature gentle, and it was only by a gradual process that he equipped himself with the sternness needful to the Guardian of Orthodoxy in France. That office once assumed, however, he was relentless in his search for heresy. Even those with whom he was closely in agreement feared his censoriousness, although they realized the inestimable value of his judgment. When, in 1699, the Benedictines of St. Maur were completing their great edition of St. Augustine, in the midst of a veritable tornado of accusation and abuse,† it was Mabillon's part to write the preface. Infinite caution and discretion were needed as well as immense learning, and Mabillon asked counsel widely and wrote and rewrote. No one was in deeper sympathy with the project than Bossuet, and each volume of the new edition as it appeared had been added to his library ; moreover, his intimacy with Mabillon had remained unbroken. Yet when the preface was submitted to him for a final revision his criticisms ‡ were so numerous and so searching that the rewriting of the whole became necessary. It is recorded that Mabillon, faced with the sum-total of his friend's demands, wept with disappointment and annoyance.§

If he was thus ruthless towards those whom he ad-

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 1104. Cf. *Œuvres, St. François de Sales*, vol. vi, ch. xxi, Annecy edition.

† For account of this singularly interesting episode *see* Butler : *Benedictine Monachism*, p. 342; and Ingold : *Hist. de l'édition bénédictine de St. Augustin*, ch. vi, xi, and appendix ii, pp. 155–193.

‡ Printed *Revue Bossuet* (1904), pp. 145–150.

§ *Revue Bossuet*, April 1900.

mired there was little hope of quarter for such unfortunate persons as aroused his wrath. In August 1694 he sent to Madame d'Albert, as a friendly token,* his *Maximes sur la Comédie*, which had just appeared. Her verdict on it is not recorded, and her esteem for the giver would have prejudiced her in favour of the gift, yet it is reasonable to suppose that its contents must have astonished her as being so unlike the expression of the mind of Bossuet with which she was familiar. This little book † is notable in many ways, and not least as an example of his capacity for concentration. There were occasions when he would seize on a disputed question and expend on it a wealth of accumulated knowledge altogether out of proportion to its actual importance, and it would seem that reflections upon modern drama had been germinating in his brain for thirty years, awaiting their opportunity for utterance.

A Religious of the Théatine Order, Père Caffaro, whose Sicilian origin may have been responsible for his ignorance of ecclesiastical prejudices in the land of his adoption, gave occasion for the celebrated pamphlet upon Comedy. He wrote a preface, described as "A Letter from a Theologian," to the plays of Boursault,‡ published in 1694, in which he contended that the presentation of Comedies was not injurious to public morals. If this imprudent theologian had challenged an article of the Creed he could hardly have aroused greater excitement. A storm of Refutations and Responses and Decisions overwhelmed the unassuming "Letter," and the author, having received a private intimation from Bossuet that his offence could not be overlooked, together with an elaborate remonstrance regarding the impropriety of the opinions to which he had committed himself, sought the only refuge open to him and disclaimed all responsibility for the printing of his work. With the

* *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 1094.

† *Œuvres*, vol. xxvii.

‡ In fact Boursault did not offend against morality, and his son, a Théatine Religious, supplied the link to Caffaro. *See* Des Granges: *La Querelle de Molière et de Boursault.*

unconditional surrender of the culprit it might have been supposed that the necessity for exposure of his errors would have ended, but the act of writing to him had opened out a train of thought in the mind of Bossuet which clamoured for expression. He was engaged just then on the examination of Madame Guyon's writings, for which he had put other tasks aside, yet he found time for the duty that seemed to be imperative, and bore his solemn testimony against the stage and its attractions. In the seclusion of Germigny perhaps his mind went back to the Paris of his youth, and once more he was stirred to wrath by the remembrance of Molière and the flashing of his mockery, by which the eyes of men were blinded to the things that concerned their peace.

Bossuet was inhuman in that he did not feel the need for mental relaxation nor allow for it in others. He urged Madame Cornuau to restrain a friend from miscellaneous reading, as if the practice were deliberate sin. He wrote that he could not understand how she could take pleasure in the work of secular writers ; " a passing glance at them is excusable, but it may be a serious check to the purposes of God upon her if she gives way to such a taste. Is it possible really to care for books in which Jesus Christ has no place ? I cannot believe it."* And to Santeul, the poet—" after so many years of intimacy with the Scriptures, which are the fount of truth, I find a certain emptiness in the inventions of human fancy."† Of the same temper is his treatise on the evil effect of Comedy. François de Sales had not made the theatre forbidden ground for Philothée so long as she did not allow her pleasure in it to absorb her.‡ It may be urged, however, that the gentle saint had small experience of cities and their dangers, and never dreamed of magic weapons such as Molière wielded, and it was the remembrance of Molière, although he had been dead for twenty years, that stirred the soul of Bossuet to

* *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1280.

† *Ibid.*, vol. vi, No. 1071. *See* also his comment on *Télémaque* as lacking in the gravity that befits a priest, vol. xii, No. 1926.

‡ *Introduction à la Vie dévote*, ch. xxiii.

righteous indignation as he mused upon the prevailing folly and feebleness of human nature. No preacher had ever held and swayed the people as did that godless player, and Bossuet saw in him the incarnation of the spirit of levity and licence against which every professing Christian was called to battle. And yet it was impossible for one who was himself entrusted with the creative faculty, who was himself an artist, not to recognize genius when he saw it. They may have had no single thought in common, yet they worked in the same field, and it is the resentment of a rival rather than the considered judgment of the censor that prompts the bitterness of Bossuet's attack. In his thunders against Molière, in his complacent confidence that too great a love of laughter will be rewarded by an eternity of tears,* Bossuet is shown in his most repellent aspect. He qualifies for a place among the Puritan divines whom Cromwell favoured, and it is curious to see how his tolerance and generosity withered at thought of Molière. The playwright made a cult of nature and upheld the law of impulse, he created men and women and gave them life, but he gave them no religion. Bossuet as scholar and as artist could discern a masterpiece, and his sense of the greatness of the gift increased his wrath at its perversion. His duty as a priest required him to renounce the freemasonry of art ; he adhered strictly to his duty, and in so doing became merciless.

That stout non-juror, Jeremy Collier, fought a similar battle with Dryden and Congreve across the Channel, and was not ashamed to borrow arguments from Bossuet ; he held equally that the giving of delight was an unworthy object and "opened the way to all licentiousness."† Nevertheless, he had a tenderness for Molière and is at infinite pains to exclude him from his censure. Perhaps it was a characteristic that they held in common, even more than their divergence in points of principle,

* *Maximes sur la Comédie*, part v.

† Collier, J.: *A Short View of the Immorality of the English Stage*, p. 290. *See* also, for earlier English opinion, *Cambridge History of Eng. Lit.*, vol. vi, ch. xiv.

which made the antagonism between these giants of French literature so virulent. In either case it is impossible to separate the man from the work that he achieved ; it is one with his identity, and by it he is set apart from the mass of ordinary humanity. The same quality in Bossuet was accountable both for his triumph in the field of learning and of letters, and for a certain lack of insight in ordinary human affairs. He could husband his intellectual power by the use of his capacity for concentration, but the adept in concentration loses in vision for the actualities of natural life. Had he lived normally, following harmless impulses, receptive to transitory impressions, it may be questioned whether his brain could have performed the tasks he required of it ; yet his renunciations were not conscious or deliberate, and their significance, and the limitation of outlook that resulted from them, became evident for the first time in his admonition to Caffaro.

There is more personal revelation in this small pamphlet than in many volumes of his accustomed work. Sixty-six years of life lay behind him, and each, since he had had capacity for choice, had been directed by an unfailing purpose. If in those years he had made room for pleasure the clear lines that marked the way of his vocation must have been broken. Instead he centred all his ardour on his tasks, and so excluded the temptation of amusement. To impose the same habit of repression on all Christian men and women appeared to him the surest remedy for the sins and follies by which society was poisoned. It was easy to support his view from the writings of the Fathers, especially from St. Augustine, and he found a passage of St. Chrysostom that pronounces laughter to be unbecoming to a Christian. Also his recent study of the Epistle of St. John was still vivid in his mind, and in all good faith he associated the pleasure that a man may find in Comedy with that lust of the eyes and love of the world that banishes the love of God. Happiness he acknowledged to be a part of the Divine intention for the lives of men,* but he repudiated all connection between

* *Correspondance*, vol. v, No. 793.

happiness and the vain delight sought by the playgoer.

It would seem that his own inclinations drew him in the direction of display ; he loved authority and the outward show for which his office gave him opportunity, while the excitement he denounced had no dangers for him. Nevertheless, he did not write ignorantly ; he had been a playgoer in his student days,* and there were later occasions when in his association with the Court he was a spectator at special performances.† Moreover, he had ample opportunities of obtaining knowledge of each succeeding comedy that caught the public fancy. The fault of his *Maximes* is the personal bias with which he entered on them and not lack of data. He allowed himself to write as if love-making and laughter in themselves were reprehensible and their presentation in counterfeit before the public eye the gravest of iniquities. He argued further that, as the enjoyment of the spectator depended on his capacity to associate himself with the characters impersonated, fictitious passion and fictitious sin disseminated its counterpart in actuality on each occasion that it was presented. He was supporting the teaching of the Church, for in France a comedian was denied the Sacraments in his life-time‡ or Christian burial at his death, but his vehemence is greater than loyalty required. In fact, he magnified the danger. He forgot that, ordinarily, the theatre affords only a passing respite from the cares and entanglements by which the lives of individuals are darkened, and the influence of the stage, as it appeared to him, bore no relation to its actual effect on men and women in the mass. The gravity of his warning, while it was a tribute to the art of Molière, bears testimony to the dramatic instinct in himself. He also, with his eyes upon an audience,

* Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 24.

† In March 1699 he witnessed a performance of " Le Misanthrope " at Versailles by royal amateurs (*Revue Bossuet Supplément*, July 1909).

‡ In 1719 Cardinal de Noailles relaxed this rule so far as to license an Italian chaplain to minister to a troupe of Italian comedians (*Correspondance Saint-Fonds*, p. 99).

could calculate effect and play upon emotion, and he gave undue importance to the results. It was hard for him to realize that in general the impressions produced from the pulpit or the stage were transitory ; * he judged them by the exceptional cases where they had proved permanent.

Caffaro was the most invertebrate of all the offenders against whom the thunder of Bossuet's wrath was launched, and if there had been no Molière it may be doubted whether his ill-judged experiment would have excited notice. The bitterness with which the playwright was attacked by the representatives of the Church is now impossible to understand ; they descried an insidious evil in the comedies that was, apparently, a greater danger to the community than open vice, and it is interesting to remember that it was Harlai, Archbishop of Paris, as profligate an ecclesiastic as that licentious age produced, who refused Christian burial to the body of Molière.† Yet there can be no question that Bossuet took action in absolute good faith. The violence of his *Maximes sur la Comédie* is the true expression of his mind upon that subject at that moment, and it is another instance of his refusal to consider any opinion differing from his own. By comparing it with his Letter to Port Royal in 1665 it is possible to measure his accession in intellectual arrogance during thirty years. It would appear that he was most aggressive when he engaged in single combat. Fénelon, when he turned the Quietism controversy into a duel, revenged himself upon his adversary, for his own loss in fortune through that battle was not greater than the loss in reputation sustained by Bossuet. Yet the attack on Quietism, although it would appear to be the most celebrated in the history of the great champion, was only one of many attacks delivered during his episcopate at Meaux, and in each and all he was equally self-confident. The conviction of mistake, which is the salutary ex-

* *Cf.* Madame de Sévigné : " *Toute touchée du sermon vous passez à la comédie, cela est excellent, ma belle* " (*Lettres*, vol. vii, No. 957).

† Voltaire : *Vie de Molière*.

perience of ordinary mortals, never seems to have overtaken him. His decisions justified themselves. In the case of Ellies Dupin, for instance, the sequel gave adequate reason for a severity that seemed at the time to be excessive.*

Dupin was a doctor of the Sorbonne and a man of immense learning and industry. He embarked upon a vast study of ecclesiastical literature which eventually filled fifty-eight volumes. In 1691 Bossuet became suspicious of his orthodoxy, and would not be satisfied by any professions of submission. He drew up a memoir regarding him for M. Pirot, the official censor, and no intervention was of any avail in softening his judgment. There are some very charming letters from Fénelon, who seems to have been well disposed towards the culprit, which were calculated to divert severity and open the way to an amicable understanding, but Bossuet had convinced himself that Dupin was heterodox at heart and would give no quarter.† Had he been able to foretell the actual form of Dupin's eventual offending his denunciation would have been even more vehement. His reputation as a Gallican had made him the more anxious to insist that spiritual submission to the decisions of Rome was the first essential of Catholicity, and when it dawned on him that the faith of the Anglican differed from that of Calvinist or Lutheran in that it claimed to be the Catholic Faith he shrank from it as the most insidious of all forms of heresy. It was the great desire of Dupin, on the other hand, to steer the Church in France towards Anglicanism. His celebrated correspondence with Archbishop Wake on the question of reunion reveals an attitude of mind which is the antithesis to that of Bossuet.‡

The fact that the champion of Gallicanism demanded a profession of allegiance to the Pope as a preliminary to any terms of reunion must never be forgotten. We

* *Correspondance*, vol. iii, No. 591 and *note*.

† See *Correspondance*, vol. iv, Nos. 729, 730, 731, and *notes*.

‡ Lupton: *Archbishop Wake and Project of Union*; and F. G.: *Un Projet d'Union—Correspondance entre Wake et Dupin*.

may find him striving, with an insistence that savoured of dictation, to draw opinion at Rome towards the concessions which he regarded as essential if the Protestant nations were to be won back ; but always the advances were to be made from the Seat of Supreme Authority ; the independence that set a limit on spiritual obedience received no countenance from him. Undoubtedly his *Exposition* had suggested an idea of tolerance which was not sustained by his actual negotiations with Protestants. By his refusal to parley with the English form of protest he lessened the hope of unity in that direction, and when, from a centre of Reform, an overture towards peace was made he met it with a rigidity that should have satisfied the severest critics of his book. For him the suggestion that there might be neutral ground between the full Faith and open heresy was an outrage upon reason. Consequently his celebrated correspondence with Leibniz,* which had as its original object the reconciliation of the Protestants of Hanover with Rome, was doomed to failure from the beginning. The project of reunion emanated from the Emperor Leopold in 1691, and Molanus, Professor of Theology in Hanover, drew up a scheme of mutual concession by which the Protestants offered obedience to the Pope in exchange for his recognition of their Churches. Leibniz, who was nominally a Lutheran, was chosen to represent Hanoverian opinion,† and Bossuet was regarded as the mediator in whose hands the project had most possibility of success. Both selections were unfortunate. Leibniz avowed that he was a Catholic at heart, but that the essence of Catholicity was not exterior communion with Rome.‡ Bossuet required recognition of the spiritual authority of Rome before he would consider any claim made by the Protestant Churches. Nevertheless, at the least suggestion of reunion he became prodigal of time and thought ; the correspondence continued for ten years and some of

* "*En vue de la réunion des Églises.*" See *Correspondance*, vol. v, appendix vi.

† Broglie, A. de : *Leibniz—Système Religieux.*

‡ *Œuvres de Leibniz*, vol. i, p. 163.

his letters reach the proportions of a pamphlet. In 1700* he was still hopeful of some good results, although the enthusiasm prompting the original scheme had faded. In fact, it was always hopeless ; Leibniz was a dilettante in belief—an interested observer who remained until his death in possession of an open mind—and as such he was incomprehensible to Bossuet. They were mutually attracted, and it cannot be said that their association was fruitless because we owe to it the series of letters from Bossuet to Leibniz, which, as a record of his processes of thought, are of extraordinary interest.

In relation to the absorbing object of his life, however, the intercourse with Leibniz was mere dallying. The progress of events that concerned the Church had shown him the futility of holding the door wide to welcome Protestants if wolves were harrying the flock within the fold, and the spirit in which he faced the future was at once defiant and apprehensive. Yet the charitable intention with which his career began had never altered, the desire for reunion among all Christians remained his chief desire ; it was the simplicity of his original method which was no longer tenable. He had acknowledged in his youth that it was mainly to the sins of Churchmen that the great Protestant revolt was due, and as his years advanced he saw in their disloyalty and rashness the most insuperable obstacle to the recall of the lost nations. It was in vain to paint a picture of the Church as a haven of peace and charity awaiting the struggling sects when they grew weary of internecine warfare, so long as self-opinionated adventurers protruded questions that sowed discord among the faithful. The long series of controversies that engaged him justify his conviction that there was need for a defender of the Faith, and when, in 1687, he renounced the personal triumphs of the orator, he set the seal on his self-dedication to a laborious and thorny task.

In the last and stormiest period of Bossuet's career there were occasions when his zeal betrayed his charity, yet the impression of petulant interference is due less

* Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 3.

to his own pugnacity than to his isolation. It was the tragedy of his position that those who had the intellectual capacity to aid him in the fight were tempted from their allegiance by the independence that led to heresy. No better allies in warfare against Protestants than the scholars of Port Royal could be imagined * if there had been no taint upon them, and, when their loss had been accepted, there came Fénelon's disaffection, with its incalculable injury † to the defences of the Church. Such reflections may have acted as irritants and helped to bring the mind of Bossuet under the dominion of a fixed idea in those last years. Old age did not manifest itself in failing powers, but, with the inevitable waning of youthful optimism, the consciousness and prescience of assaults upon the Faith from all directions left him no peace. "My business is none of it my own—it is that of the Church."‡ "There is nothing human in any of my undertakings." "It is well known, thank God, that I have no love of writing for itself. When I write I have no object save to declare the truth"—such expressions indicate his mental attitude.

If it had been possible to recognize the Bishop of Meaux as censor of all theological publications the strain upon him would have been far less. The office was in other hands, however, and he was harassed by perpetual fears that damaging books might elude his vigilance and work harm that could never be retrieved before he could denounce them. It may well be imagined that he was the terror of the younger generation of theological writers, and his integrity was so well known that none might hope to escape his censure by favour or cajolery. He took prompt and relentless action when the danger justified it. We have seen how he dealt with Dupin and Caffaro. He himself has described an opening episode in a struggle that lasted twenty-five years and gave another

* Sainte-Beuve: *Hist. de Port Royal*, vol. iv, pp. 445, 446.

† *Cf.* Bossuet's lament over "*les grands services qu'il est capable de rendre s'il s'était tourné d'une autre sorte*" (*Correspondance*, vol. xi, No. 1879).

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, Nos. 1156, 1157.

of the many instances of his severity. An Oratorian named Richard Simon devoted himself to the study and translation of the Scriptures. He possessed that familiarity with Hebrew which was lacking to the equipment of the Port Royalists,* and in 1678 he prepared a criticism of the Old Testament † and secured for it the approval and authority necessary for its publication. Four days before that on which it was to appear it was brought to the notice of Bossuet.‡ The care of the Dauphin's education does not seem to have delayed the royal tutor in his investigations. The preface and index which had been placed in his hands gave him sufficient data on which to act, for the subject of one of the chapters was "That Moses cannot have written all the books attributed to him," and that alone was a sufficient summons to the champion of Tradition to take up arms. "I saw that the book was a mass of profanity. I went at once to the Chancellor (Le Tellier)—it was the Thursday in Holy Week—and he gave a warrant to M. de La Reynie to seize every copy. The gentlest way is always the wisest, and we made every effort to save the book by interpolation and correction, but it was so full of dangerous suggestion that after a close examination M. de La Reynie had orders to burn every copy—there were twelve or fifteen hundred."§

Richard Simon was the Modernist of the seventeenth century, and with the exception of Fénelon he was the most exasperating of Bossuet's antagonists. It was impossible to refuse him credit for prodigious learning, and coupled with it was a self-confidence that left him unabashed before rebuke. His Criticism of the Old Testament was printed in Holland when he found there was no escape from the sentence of Le Tellier, and although the pressure of Bossuet and the Port

* Sainte-Beuve: *Port Royal*, vol. ii, p. 361, *note*.

† *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament*.

‡ Card. Bausset makes Antoine Arnauld responsible, but the testimony of Simon points to Eusèbe Renaudot. *See* La Broise: *Bossuet et la Bible*, p. 338; and Margival, H.: *Essai sur R. Simon*, p. 90.

§ *Œuvres*, vol. iii, p. 374.

Royalists secured his expulsion from among the Oratorians and deprived him of the use of their library, Simon continued his researches * and from time to time published critical studies on the Scriptures.

In 1701 he completed a translation of the New Testament which was submitted to examiners appointed by Bossuet and Cardinal de Noailles. A year later the book was printed at Trévoux with the approval and recommendation of Bourret, the great authority on Holy Scripture at the Sorbonne. Even so impressive a sanction did not satisfy Bossuet; his conclusion with regard to Simon was that every new production of his brain would infallibly contain new errors,† and he devoted six weeks to the study of the Trévoux Testament. There was only one result possible from those weeks of study. If two scholars approach the same subject from opposing points of view the violence of their conflict will be in direct ratio to their enthusiasm. Bossuet ‡ and Simon were both enthusiasts. Simon took delight in research for its own sake. Unfortunately, while he disliked the doctrines of the Protestants § and of the Jansenists,|| and believed sincerely that his investigations would strengthen the defences of the Church, he lacked the virtue of humility that is often the distinction of great scholars, and his love of adventure was not balanced by respect for the master-minds of bygone centuries. Towards the teaching of St. Augustine in particular he showed complete indifference.¶ Now Bossuet had been striving for perfect assimilation of his mind with that of St. Augustine throughout his life. Wherever he

* *See* Batterel, L.: *Mémoires domestiques pour servir à l'histoire de l'Oratoire*, vol. iv, pp. 233–295.

† Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 202.

‡ "*En fait de critique Bossuet n'était qu'un apprenti auprès de Richard Simon*" (Bremond: *Bossuet*, etc., vol. iii, p. 139).

§ As the best means of reconciling Huguenots he recommended "*les faire rentrer à coups de bâton dans l'Église*" (*Lettres choisies*, vol. ii, p. 336).

|| Margival: *Richard Simon*, p. 84.

¶ Margival: *op. cit.*, p. 20. *Cf.* Arnauld, A. (*Lettres*, vol. vii, p. 155): "*La manière dont il y parle de St. Augustin est insupportable.*"

went a volume of St. Augustine went with him ; he had one large edition at Meaux, another in Paris, his writings, whether controversial or devotional, abound in reference to his master,* and it may truly be said of him that he was impregnated with the Augustinian spirit. Moreover, he regarded the smallest attack upon Tradition as an attempt to strike at the foundation of the Faith ; the Truth, sufficient and unalterable, had been delivered to the Church, and for fifty years it had been his sacred task to defend it from all aggression.

In the long-past days at Versailles, when he knew that his judgment would be final on a question of theology, he could afford to be patient with an audacious scholar ; at seventy-six the time for dallying was past. He declared that this question was the most important with which he had ever had to deal, for he saw in Simon's work an attempt to dispute the authenticity of Scripture, and his consternation deepened when he realized that the world looked on unmoved while sacrilegious hands plucked at its holiest treasure. It must be acknowledged that he did not carry public opinion with him. The Cardinal Archbishop was only half-hearted in condemnation of work admired by the Sorbonne ; and the Chancellor, Pontchartrain, went so far as to refuse to license the printing of Bossuet's attack on Simon until the official censor had approved it.† It was the last battle of the aged champion, and it was a hard one. He had never been more convinced of the rightness of his cause ‡ and he had never been more isolated. He had made some enemies by his firmness over Jouarre and many by his Quietism victory, and the time was past when men sought his favour for their own advantage. There was a prospect of a species of defeat in the matter of Pontchartrain, small in itself but great in the contempt that it implied, and in his old age the drawback of his un-

* Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 51.

† Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 310.

‡ For vigorous letter written from Meaux to Cardinal de Noailles *re* Simon, published by Père Griselle, S.J., see *Revue de Lille* (December 1899).

distinguished origin once more was evident. Family interest near the Throne would have relieved him from the degrading necessity of continual appearance at Versailles to plead his cause ; without it he had no other hope of evading the insolent requirement of the Chancellor. Day after day he was forced to be in attendance on the King, and his mind was occupied with devising schemes to gain the ear of Madame de Maintenon.*

Eventually his main object was attained, although he bought success at the cost of humiliating compromise. His denunciation of Simon became public, and in the dioceses of Paris and of Meaux the New Testament in the Trévoux version was proscribed. He had desired to follow up his triumph by the publication of his *Défense de la Tradition et des Pères*, undertaken more than ten years earlier to counteract those evils for which he conceived the Oratorian scholar to be responsible. But opportunity and power failed him, and the absorbing interest which his book offers to readers of the present day did not come within the limits of his purpose. What he wrote stands actually as the first chapter in the history of Modernism. And while it perpetuates the name and the endeavour of Richard Simon it is an illuminating revelation of the mental position of Bossuet himself. For his thunders are not directed solely against Simon ; he makes it plain that he would preclude all Biblical criticism. He upholds dogmatic orthodoxy opposed to Modernism, and the system of tradition, religious and political, against all innovation. In him the spirit of the Conservative, without mitigation or alloy, becomes incarnate. Standing as he does at the opening of that century which was to see the Old Order overthrown he is a tragic figure.

* Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 330.

Chapter XXVI. *The End*

IT was in September 1702 that Bossuet preached for the last time. The priests gathered at Meaux for the Episcopal Synod assembled in his private chapel, and the terms of his address bear witness to a premonition that it was his last. As old age approached the thought of death was not so present with him as in his youth ; the excitements and anxieties of life overwhelmed it, and the sudden end of Harlai, Archbishop of Paris, in 1695, without sacraments or preparation, seems to have recalled him with a shock to his own carelessness. As a reminder he set apart a sum to ensure an annual service of requiem for his soul on September 21, and while he lived a special mass was to be said to commemorate his consecration as bishop.* He felt the reminder to be salutary, and his references to it in his letters show that it needed effort to keep the thought of death before him.

The three last years of his life were recorded in detail by his secretary. In 1684, at the suggestion of Mabillon,† the young student François Ledieu was engaged as secretary to the Bishop of Meaux, and he retained his office until the death of his employer. He was a man of painstaking and industrious habits, but not distinguished by special gifts in mind or character, and he was never admitted to his master's confidence. Nevertheless, his observations in his *Journal* and the Memoir he compiled from his reminiscences after the death of Bossuet have the vivid interest of intimate personal knowledge. From them it is possible to construct the picture for which he had not vision. In those three years the conflict of opposing forces that since he reached maturity had distracted the inner life of Bossuet was especially severe. In following the statements of Ledieu, however, it must be remembered that the emphasis in each direction is determined by the predilections of the writer. The Court and public business had the highest claim on notice, and after that all that concerned the intellect and the world of books. Literature, as understood at

* *Correspondance*, vol. viii, No. 1421.

† *Revue Bossuet Supplément* (June 1911).

Meaux, was synonymous with theology, but it was no less a business than affairs of State, and hardly less alienated from personal religion. In the mind of the secretary his master's dealings with the Court were of infinite moment, and his unvarnished record of them is painful reading. That the end of a fine and worthy life was marred by a lack of dignity and judgment is incontestable. Bossuet in his prime had protested that he had no desire to benefit his family at the expense of the Church, but in his old age the curious failing which has been so common a snare to high-placed ecclesiastics overcame his principles; he was devoted to his nephew.

The correspondence relating to the Quietism controversy conveys an unpleasing impression of the Abbé Bossuet which is not counteracted by any later evidence regarding him. Even his enemies did not deny his cleverness, however, and in his own view he was supremely fitted to succeed his uncle as Bishop of Meaux. The clouded close of Bossuet's life is chiefly due to this unfortunate ambition. He felt himself to be under obligation to his nephew for the success achieved in the miserable contest that for so long had dislocated his plans and habits. It was said of them that they were of one mind in their conduct of the battle, and the ascendancy the young abbé gained over his uncle seems to have been a result of their joint victory. When he returned from Rome in triumph he took command of the bishop's palace at Meaux, and then by gradual degrees achieved some measure of dominion over the bishop himself.

Bossuet had never pressed for favours; had he done so he might have mounted higher, but a certain natural dignity restrained him. It would seem that his hopes of the purple were never entirely extinguished,* yet he did not protrude his claim before the King. The post of Almoner to the Dauphine had been conferred upon him when his tutorship concluded, and on the marriage of the Duke of Burgundy in 1697 he seems to have suggested that, as his earlier appointment had lapsed by death,

* *Correspondance*, vol. viii, Nos. 1527, 1531; vol. ix, No. 1694.

it should be renewed in the household of the young duchess.* He had been appointed Counsellor of State in June † of that year, which proved that his favour with the King was sufficient to justify a claim to further honour. When that petition was granted ‡ he asked no more for himself, for his solicitation for support against Richard Simon was ostensibly in the public interest. It must be acknowledged that he was familiar with the methods of a courtier, however. At the time of the great Clerical Assembly of 1700, when a censure of the system of casuistry was in question, it was by his persistent and indefatigable cultivation § of Madame de Maintenon's interest that he was able to achieve the result he desired. He would be in attendance on her at seven in the morning, and proceed to the levée of the King after his interview was over. He said Mass only when these duties were accomplished. He was seventy-three at this time, and his secretary was moved to enthusiastic admiration by this evidence of his zeal and energy. According to the standards of the time his cultivation of Court interest to support a special policy did not derogate from the dignity of his years and office. It would claim no comment had it ended there. Unfortunately this was not his last appearance as a courtier. His nephew seized on success in a public matter as a good omen for a personal petition, and from that time the aged bishop was more assiduous at Court than he had been since he entered on his charge.

In the summer of 1701 || he was following the King regardless of bodily fatigue, and taking trouble to impress on others his claim to a place among the favoured. He gained nothing by his visits to Versailles, and as the futility of his solicitations became increasingly apparent

* *Ibid.*, vol. viii, Nos. 1403, 1408.

† Ledieu : *Mémoires*, p. 206.

‡ Limiers, a contemporary historian, says : "*M. de Meaux avait recherché avec empressement la charge de Premier Almonier ; M. de Cambrai avait paru aussi la souhaiter mais sans faire de brigues pour l'obtenir*" (*Hist. du Règne de Louis XIV*, vol. vii, liv. xiii, p. 96). Limiers is inimical to Bossuet on all points, however.

§ Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 51, 86, 145. || *Ibid.*, pp. 197–199.

he seems to have been more and more goaded to their renewal by the Abbé Bossuet. In the summer of 1703 his efforts, valiant in themselves yet pitiable in result, to maintain his right to office were exciting the derision of the Court. His tottering limbs hardly supported him through the ceremonial incumbent on him,* yet the resignation of his place as almoner would deprive him of excuse for appearance at Versailles, and his nephew refused to accept the defeat implied. In August serious illness seized him, and Madame de Maintenon persuaded Fleury to convey to him the protest that was on the lips of all who knew him, friends as well as enemies—"his weakness in yielding to his nephew was dishonouring him; his reputation demanded that he should leave Versailles."† On September 20 he moved to his house in Paris, where he remained until his death.

For the last eighteen months of his life Bossuet drew the revenues of his bishopric and never visited his diocese, and for a time he joined the begging crowd who cringed for favours from the King and wasted the precious hours, so sorely needed for his unfinished manuscripts, in cultivating such persons as might be useful to his nephew. These are facts that cannot be refuted, and he is not less to blame because he was not self-seeking; that which he did ran counter to the principles on which his life was founded. His defence rests on the failure of his powers and on the loneliness of his old age. His intimate friends were few—Rancé, Bellefonds, his brother Antoine,‡ and Henriette d'Albert—and he had outlived them all. As long as he retained the keenness of his mental vision his work engaged him so completely that he had no observation for his nephew's faults, and in time the position of the young abbé was secure because he was the object of an old man's love. It was thus that Bossuet fell from the dignity of conduct maintained

* "*Il donna un triste spectacle qui affligea ses amis*" (Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. i, p. 468).

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 4.

‡ At his brother's death he wrote: "*je me trouve si seul qu'à peine me puis-je soutenir*" (*Correspondance*, vol. xi, No. 1865).

throughout a lifetime, and the world was not slow to recognize his fall.

There were other sides to the picture, however, of which his contemporaries knew little. He had laboured from his boyhood and he died in harness. Truly no shadow of dishonour falls on the figure of the aged scholar as he strained, in those last months, to carry out the plans made when the tide of energy was high and laid aside for the event of leisure. That which degraded came from without, it did not express the character that had been manifested during forty years of public life. And in his study the change in Bossuet was less evident, for his intellect survived his will. Ledieu is on familiar ground when he treats of his master's literary labour, and the account he gives is worth attention. During those last years his ardour was unabated. At seventy-three he resumed his old custom of rising in the night to avoid interruption to his writing. Two years later the diarist's report is full of such phrases as "he does nothing but work"; "he will not leave his work for a moment." At seventy-six the tidings that a Jesuit (Père Daniel) was writing on the criticisms of St. Augustine by Grotius aroused him to the ardour of his youth. It was intolerable that a subject so peculiarly his own should be touched by another hand, and he applied himself once more to the Instruction on the Fathers which had been destined to cover the disputed ground.* Two months before he died it was still his dearest wish to finish it, but the failing of his powers could no longer be ignored.

"I am conscious that this piece of work becomes too much for me. God's Will be done. He can raise up defenders of the Faith."

It was the last struggle (and perhaps the first surrender) of a war-worn fighter, and even then he did not finally lay down his arms. There was so much to finish, and as his thoughts passed from one to another of his manuscripts each one seemed the essential. There was the scheme of Government as designed by the authority of

* Ledieu: *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 31.

Scripture, begun while he was tutor to the Dauphin. Six parts had been completed then, but more than half remained unwritten, although during twenty-six years at Meaux he could not accuse himself of any idleness. It was to have been finished for the benefit of the Duke of Burgundy,* but his dispute with Fénelon had intervened, and he did not return to it till the winter after the Clerical Assembly of 1700. From that time forward its importance weighed upon his mind. He believed that by means of this book, if he could finish it, the young would be taught that absolute monarchy was of Divine institution, and he had no fears for the future of the nation if that principle was generally accepted. At Meaux and Germigny he was indefatigable in toiling at it until the affair of Richard Simon distracted him. Finally, in his last miserable sojourn at Versailles some stirring of his bygone hero-worship moved him to pay his final tribute to the greatness of the King's Majesty, and he took his manuscript in hand again. Plainly he had a keen desire to complete it, and if his secretary had influenced him it would have received the final touches at whatever cost to other undertakings. The old scholar was not influenced by his secretary, however, and his mind, despite its feebleness, groped through the intellectual temptation and seized on the one study that was still of consequence. The hour for controversy or politics or the display of scholarship was past.

Bossuet had lived in the world of books ; its fascination had grown upon him as his years increased until it could be said, even when he was in residence at Meaux, that " he was chiefly occupied with study."† Nevertheless, in moments of reflection he allowed himself no illusions regarding the literary vocation. His verdict on it suggests that, when he felt the end approaching, his survey of the years that lay behind was not brightened by undue satisfaction in his use of them. " I pause here " —he wrote in the midst of notes on the philosophy of Aristotle—" to consider the usefulness of reading. It

* *Œuvres*, vol. xxiv : *Remarques historiques*, p. iii.

† Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 169.

illuminates, awakens, arouses curiosity just as conversation does. The first is the more deliberate, the second more spontaneous. On the other hand reading is apt to dazzle ; it teaches us to borrow thoughts from others and keep them as our own, it burdens memory, confuses judgment, blights originality. We are pleased to have reached a conclusion when we have discovered what is thought by someone else."*

It is a severe indictment, and the more worthy of notice because it is lodged by a prolific writer, but we have seen that Bossuet's authorship did not spring from the desire to produce a book ; he had always a cause to be upheld, and his pen was the only weapon that would serve his purpose. " He tried to rouse himself to defend the Truth, and reproached himself for his uselessness and inability to work." Thus Ledieu describes him at seventy-six, and it shows that the passion of a lifetime was hard to quench. In the secretary's mind the importance of his master's literary undertakings dwarfed every other consideration. Indeed, his desire for their completion prompted him to reminders that sometimes provoked Bossuet to a measure of impatience.

" If I do not get on with it it is because I have not time. After all, I prefer not to divide my head into four pieces."† In that remonstrance he enters into momentary fellowship with the scribes and students of every generation. His brain was overtaxed and he acknowledged it.

Yet, though he rebelled at importunity, the lust of finishing possessed him. The picture of his last two years is painful ; it shows him perpetually turning from one to another of his manuscripts and books, eager to bring his published work to more absolute perfection and to complete his many literary projects. And in considering the courage he displayed when illness and old age had clutched him it is well to notice that Bossuet did not write with facility. The thoughts of Fénelon clothed themselves in words without effort, and the pages of his

* *Revue Bossuet* (January 1902). (MS. Bib. Nat., ff. 12830.)

† Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 237.

manuscripts are fair.* To the uninitiated it must have seemed that the intellectual cost of their voluminous controversy was equally divided. This was not the case, however, and the fact of his disadvantage increased the wrath of the old champion. His manuscripts are scored and corrected and interlined : they witness to the spirit of the artist, to the discontent that is unappeased by the admiration of the world. He might glory at a later stage in the effect produced by brilliant style and ruthless logic, but in his study with pen on paper he sought the language that would satisfy him as the medium for his thought—and he was never satisfied.

Henriette d'Albert, jealous of the preoccupation that spoilt their correspondence, pressed for a description of his methods. " Why should it be known whether I write easily or with great labour," he answered ; " it is God who gives me my time and I have no misgivings that I am wasting it."†

At the moment he feared Fénelon and his superiority in cleverness, but that reply, joined to the confusion of his original pages, suggests the reality of toil in the long hours spent before his desk. In spite of all that is implied by that acknowledgment of toil, however, he had the courage to embark upon another book. It saw the light two months before he died, and between its covers we may seek the key to his real mind during his long ordeal of pain and solitude. In May 1702, being at Germigny and still in health, he said he was trying to prepare for death and was saying Psalm xxi very often, going to sleep and awakening with the words of it on his lips. He added that it had been specially consecrated by the use Our Lord had made of it, and that within it might be found " the confidence in God that is needful for the great journey " ; ‡ he believed the

* " *Jamais personne n'a écrit avec tant de facilité que M. de Cambrai. Il méditait bien sa matière, après quoi il se mettait à écrire avec tant de rapidité qu'il ne levait la plume de sur le papier que pour prendre de l'encre*" (*Correspondance Saint-Fonds*, p. 88).

† *Correspondance*, vol. vii, No. 1300.

‡ Ledieu : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 289 (see Psalm xxii in Eng. version).

essential preparation lay in this confidence. Subsequently Ledieu became more interested in other developments of his master's thought, and there was the sordid interlude of Court attendance to record. The subject seems to be forgotten until November 1703, when he notes that he is once more employed in transcribing the Meditation on Psalm xxi. And three months later it was printed and bound and presented to the King.*

It is safe to assume that the production of one month, when failing powers and constant suffering made literary effort difficult, had been mellowing in a long period of profound reflection. With these pages open before us the detail of the previous chronicle—the entertainments given at Versailles to high-placed persons, the jewelled ear-rings worth ten thousand francs that were the aged bishop's wedding gift to a nephew's wife, the calculation and display in all dealings with the outside world—all this assumes a different aspect. We have seen an old man yielding lamentably before the insistence of unworthy kinsfolk, yet in things essential there was no surrender. He became docile beneath his nephew's government in all external matters because domestic strife taxed his enfeebled powers unbearably. This is the condition that the secretary's *Journal* presents to us.

And it is clear that there remained to him an inner sanctuary to which neither Ledieu nor the Abbé Bossuet had access. He had told Henriette d'Albert that she might follow the abbess on a journey without scruple because he knew that at heart she was always in Retreat,† and it may be that, in his distress and weakness, he gave himself a similar dispensation and took the way of least resistance in the knowledge that his real desires were set unalterably. And so, while his outward dignity slipped from him and, to a mocking world, he seemed to have cast away the standards of unworldliness towards which he had pointed others, his inner vision was fixed upon the one thing needful. Jesus upon the Cross in agony and

* *Œuvres*, vol. ii, p. 264.

† *Correspondance*, vol. vi, No. 1051.

desolation, the Risen Jesus rejoicing before God, this was the theme for which his comprehension was unclouded and to which he gave the final labour of his laborious life. The last chapter of his Commentary demands particular notice. Here, as in isolated passages of his other writings, he lifts the veil unconsciously, the theologian ceases to expound, and there is revealed the struggling human soul hard pressed by human frailty. It is in his study of Christ upon the Cross facing the horror of the sins of men that we get into momentary touch, at this last stage, with the mind of Bossuet. Through a long life he had held inflexibly to certain principles, but it cannot be maintained that the gulf betwixt ideal and practice grew less as the years passed. There is repeated evidence that he was aware of his own failure, that he desired to rise above it, and yet was so entangled by the temptations of the work which he believed to be his work for God that self-accusation ended in fresh compromise. And it would seem that, looking back over the years, he saw the truth, and the despondency that in a weakened mind may breed despair laid hold of him. It was well that he had not completely forfeited the simplicity of early days ; by virtue of it he took to himself the healing he had been required so often to dispense. Of all his books the last holds the most comfort for a dying Christian. He had written, among the meditations intended for the Religious in his diocese, one on preparation for Death ; * in it the thoughts of a spiritual mind are expressed in stately prose ; but between it and his explanation of the Psalm there is the difference that divides theory from experience.

In his book on the Sacred Mysteries he had dwelt on the effect of mental habit, and shown that the brain retains the impress of frequent meditation. "Those whose study had been fixed on the Life and Death of Christ would find that subject returning in hours of disturbance or weariness," he wrote.† His own habit was so fixed that his secretary, after twenty years' associa-

* *Œuvres*, vol. vii : *Opuscules de Piété*, No. 17.

† *Ibid.*, 4me semaine ; 8me élévation.

tion, accepted it as part of the ordinary routine, unnecessary to note in a daily chronicle. In the Memoir of him, however, we are told that he knew the Bible almost by heart and yet read and reread it every day.* Here and there, also, in the daily record of feverish literary enterprise and unworthy social effort, there is a sentence easy to overlook yet charged with meaning. "Monseigneur showed great pleasure in reading the Gospel, especially such passages as regard detachment; it is on this that his heart is set." "I read him Fifteenth Chapter, St. John. He said: 'My sole consolation is in this.'" "This evening (it was just two months before his death) Monseigneur began reading the Epistle to the Romans; for quite six months or more he has read and reread the Gospels, chiefly St. John, and in St. John the parts that claim most reflection; he has also read the Acts of the Apostles through twice, and now he is going on to the Epistles of St. Paul. Every morning, also, he goes back to his own *Méditations sur l'Évangile* and corrects something in it, but he says this is done without method or intention, and is only for his own satisfaction."

In his own hour of disturbance and weariness the meditations of a lifetime served him in good stead. "The foundation of all knowledge is the Scriptures. Of that Book one can never have complete knowledge."† So he had written in his youth, and he was still making fresh discoveries. In those last weeks the residue of his other studies became the most painful of distractions—we are told of the night when his fevered brain vainly pursued the *Odes* of Horace through many hours of wakefulness, and could not rest till they were read aloud. It is well that that picture of mental agony can be balanced by the thought of his continual meditation on St. John. The Fourth Gospel was too indelibly his own for any nightmare of shifting memory to haunt his musings on it.

In leaving his diocese for Versailles and Paris Bossuet left behind him the persons and associations most calcu-

† Ledieu: *Mémoires*, p. 48. ‡ *Œuvres*, vol. xxvi, p. 109.

lated to uphold him in hours of desolation. He had done much to raise the standard of the Religious in the many Communities under his care to a high level of spirituality ; he had urged on his priests that the demand of their vocation was the continual endeavour to be perfect,* and, in Meaux itself, he had made the Seminary a centre of pure teaching and example. Thus he had created the atmosphere most calculated to bring him peace, and there he would have had at hand better companions in hours of suffering than Ledieu or the Abbé Bossuet. The Abbé St. André † was a leading spirit among the clergy of the diocese, and to him, whenever he could leave his duties and come to Paris, Bossuet turned with special confidence. The account that he has left of the closing scenes in the house in the Rue St. Anne bears witness to an understanding of the dying man in which Ledieu was lacking. His account carries conviction because it is the natural sequel to the spiritual life story which can be traced behind the great events of a notable career. It shows us once again the friend of Bellefonds and Henriette d'Albert with his sudden self-revelations and his deep humility ; and the mystery of penitence rather than the glow of sanctity envelops him. The long procession of the years, as he reviewed them, held many memories that did not make for peace, and he was dismayed at the approach of death. One day, when St. André had been reading the Bible with him, he remained for a long time lost in thought, and then, rising up suddenly as if an idea possessed him, he exclaimed : "I cannot believe, O God, that Thou hast given me this certainty of Thy lovingkindness for naught. My salvation is a thousand times more assured in Thy keeping than by my efforts. I desire to surrender myself absolutely, to live apart from Thee is to fall into despair."‡

* "*Le sacerdoce est un état de pénitence et de gémissement*" (*Œuvres*, vol. xii, p. 92).

† For high standing of St. André *see* Letter of Cardinal de Bissy to M. de Fénelon, July 12, 1731 (*Revue Bossuet* (1904), p. 51).

‡ *Relation de M. de St. André* (Ledieu : *Mémoires*, appendix, p. 265).

That is the cry of a troubled soul to whom despair is not impossible. But the clouds lifted as the end approached. "Pray often," he said, "but only shortly, because I am in pain. Say the Lord's Prayer over and over again. Pause at the words 'Adveniat regnum tuum, fiat voluntas tua'—that is the perfect prayer for a Christian."

In the presence of St. André Ledieu made a characteristic effort to cheer his master by telling him of the high-placed personages who asked for him and lamented his suffering; he assured him, also, that everyone was talking of his value to the Church and to the nation.

"It would be better to talk to me about my sins," he answered, "and to ask God to pardon them and to give me grace that I may praise Him for His mercy. As to my suffering, it cannot be more than I deserve."

The time had passed when Bossuet could find solace in the greatness that his secretary pictured. In long night watches and slow days of pain the old man had put off the arrogance which was the aftermath of his battles and his triumphs. He knew that none of his acquirements would help him to face death, and at the end he went to meet it as a child might do. He asked for help in his preparation, and St. André expressed astonishment that he, whom God had enlightened so far beyond his fellows, should need anything a simple priest could give. The answer of the dying man reiterated the disavowal of spiritual privilege with which in former times he had astounded those who revered him most. "Make no mistake," he said; "a man may be given much for the help of others and have no light by which to guide himself."

It is clear from all the evidence that he shrank with more than ordinary dread from pain and from the approach of death. When he had long attained to threescore years and ten his vigour was unabated and his grip on life was hard to loose; thus he who had preached to others of resignation rebelled himself. The shadows hang thickly over the last year, and any impression of him that we can distinguish is of a trembling figure, for-

lorn in its isolation. And yet, though the darkness may have been full of terrors, in the midst of it he found his way to peace. Perhaps the truest summary of this stage of his long journey is in the concluding passage of his last book: "When the soul is so troubled that it is near the point of agony let us learn to say with Jesus His prayer in the Garden—that courageous prayer: 'Not as I will but as Thou wilt.'"

His suffering ended early in the morning of April 14, 1704, while St. André watched beside him, and he met death without distress.

Appendices

Appendix I. *Chronological Table*

EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF BOSSUET		PUBLIC EVENTS IMPORTANT TO HIS CAREER	
1627	Birth	1624	Richelieu First Minister
1642	Goes to College of Navarre	1642	Death of Richelieu
1653	Ordained Priest, resident at Metz	1648–1653	The Fronde
1655	First Book Printed	1656	Pascal's First Provincial Letter
1658	Mission at Metz	1659	Molière plays in Paris
1661	Preaches before the King	1661	Death of Mazarin
1665	Dealings with Port Royal Nuns	1663	Six Articles Propounded by Sorbonne
1666–1667	Treats with Paul Ferry for Reunion	1666	Death of Anne of Austria
1669	Appointed Bishop of Condom	1668	Conversion of Turenne
1670	Appointed Tutor to the Dauphin	1670	Death of Madame
1671	*L'Exposition* Published	1675	Death of Turenne
1678	Conference with Claude	1680	Marriage of the Dauphin
1681	Appointed Bishop of Meaux	1682	Declaration of Clerical Assembly
1682–1685	Writes *Défense de la Déclaration*	1685	Revocation of Edict of Nantes
1687	The last *Oraison Funèbre*	1688	English Revolution
1688	Publishes *Histoire des Variations*	1689	Death of Innocent XI
1690	Reforms Abbey of Jouarre	1697	Fénelon's *Maximes des Saints*
1694–1699	Examination of Quietist Doctrine	1699	Condemnation of *Les Maximes*
1704	Death	1700	War of Spanish Succession begins

Appendix II. *Houses in Paris occupied by Bossuet*

1671–1682	Doyenné de St. Thomas du Louvre
1682–1694	Place Royale 17 (second from Rue des Francs-Bourgeois)
1694–1698	Rue Plastrière (now Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau)
1698–1702	Place des Victoires (on right from Rue des Petits-Champs)
1702–1704	Rue Ste. Anne 46

Appendix III. *Mlle. de Mauléon and the Marriage Libel*

IT has been alleged * that Bossuet contracted a secret marriage. The charge was examined and refuted by Cardinal de Bausset in the biography published in 1818.† According to his view the scandal originated with the publication of a book by a renegade priest, J. B. Denis, who had held clerical office under two successive bishops of Meaux and afterwards withdrew to London. This book, *Mémoires—anecdotes de la Cour et du Clergé de France*, appeared in 1712 and contained many details ‡ regarding the alliance between his former employer and a certain lady known as Mlle. de Mauléon. It is obvious, however, that the attempt of such a man as Denis to blacken the memory of Bossuet would have been completely ineffectual if he had relied on his own powers of invention for material. M. Charles Urbain has made this question the subject of careful investigation, the result of which is published in his pamphlet *Bossuet et Mlle. de Mauléon.* He has verified the existence of a letter written in 1704 referring to the rumour, with the comment "Je sais qu'on parle à Rome de ce mariage," § and shows that the proceedings of Bossuet's heirs must have been inspired by a fear of scandal. For Bossuet and Mlle. de Mauléon were known to each other for more than forty years, and during half that period they had business dealings, yet not a single note or memorandum of correspondence between them has survived. Moreover, on the death of the lady, Louis Bossuet contrived to be at hand, and it was he who set seal on the doors of her apartment until the King's officers should take possession.|| The excessive prudence of his nephews has proved injurious to the memory of Bossuet, and is in marked contrast to the methods which he himself pursued. He was ingenuous to the point of folly, and it may fairly be assumed that he conceived his personal character ¶ to be

* *See* especially Voltaire: *Siècle de Louis XIV*, ch. xxxii; *Hist. Universelle*, part vii; and Legendre: *Mémoires*, pp. 265–6.

† *Pièces justificatives*, liv. i.

‡ pp. 108–118.

§ p. 13. (MS., Archives Nationales, L 737.)

|| Ch. Urbain: *Bossuet et Mlle. de Mauléon.*

¶ Frotté, another renegade priest from the diocese of Meaux, writing in 1690, is lavish in accusations (among others, that Bossuet heard Mass in his dressing-gown), but makes no charge of immorality. See *Some Particular Motives of the Conversion of P. F.*, London, 1691.

beyond reach of calumny. His reply when Jurieu assigned to him "neuf enfants et plusieurs concubines" is a model of dignified disdain,* and the records of his life contain no instance of an attempt to hide his actions or intentions. During his last illness Mlle. de Mauléon paid repeated visits to the sick-room in the Rue Ste. Anne,† and when death was very near the dying man sent her a message that he "would remember her to the end."

The facts which lie behind the scandal may be summarized as follows: Catherine Gary, afterwards known as Mlle. de Mauléon, lived with her uncle, Nicolas Melique, in an apartment of the Doyenné de St. Thomas du Louvre. After his death in 1647 she remained there with her aunt. At a baptism, registered at St. Germain l'Auxerrois in 1664, J. B. Bossuet and C. Gary were godfather and godmother. This proves their acquaintance during Bossuet's residence at the Doyenné. In 1682 Catherine Gary obtained judgment in her favour at the end of a protracted lawsuit, and a contemporary document contains spiteful reference to the interest employed on her behalf by the Dauphin's tutor. On March 23 of the same year he became her surety with a lawyer named René Pageau for a loan of forty-five thousand livres.‡ In 1687 two letters to Madame de Beringhen contain references to her.§ In 1694 he and she stood sponsor to the child of a converted Huguenot. The *Journal* of Ledieu shows Bossuet paying the interest on the Pageau loan, and immediately after his death Mlle. de Mauléon made a claim on his estate. At that time she was herself insolvent, and the claim concerned the debt to Pageau. Responsibility for this debt was accepted by the Abbé Bossuet, and as it was never discharged the rumour to which it had given rise was never laid to rest. Moreover, his complicated dealings with his uncle's financial affairs fostered the impression of mystery and of dishonour || which the great man's enemies had managed to suggest. But, in fact, the

* 6*me* *Avertissement aux Protestants*, part ii, Pt. cxv.

† M. Urbain shows that some of the references to her in the *Journal* of Ledieu have been erased (*L'Abbé Ledieu: Notes critiques*).

‡ Ch. Urbain: *Bossuet et Mlle. Mauléon* and *Les Héritiers de l'Avocat Pageau*.

§ *Correspondance*, vol. iii, Nos. 427, 436.

|| Nevertheless Spanheim, Protestant Envoy of Elector of Brandenburg —a severe critic of Bossuet as controversialist—refers to "*la régularité de sa vie et de ses mœurs*" (*Relation de la Cour de France*, p. 448).

connection between Bossuet and Catherine Gary finds its explanation in the character of the lady. M. Urbain's investigations have discovered the chief points in her career, and she stands revealed as a dexterous schemer with a notable capacity for turning persons and events to the service of her interests. Bossuet, always negligent in business matters, might easily have become the victim of her money-making plots without realizing all that his liability involved. His dealings with Madame Cornuau show that he was not proof against pertinacity, and Mlle. de Mauléon imposed upon him, as did also his nephew the Abbé Bossuet. If he be held to need any defence against this ancient calumny the most complete is that of his first biographer : * " Effectivement que l'on suive M. Bossuet depuis sa plus tendre jeunesse jusqu'à la fin de sa vie, on le verra tourner toutes ses vues du côté de l'Église, n'être occupé que de l'étude, et mener une vie vraiment ecclésiastique dès son enfance sans aucune dissipation. Il est contre toute vraisemblance qu'un homme à qui ses plus grands ennemis n'ont jamais pu rien reprocher, se soit oublié à un point de violer essentiellement la discipline ecclésiastique dont il fut toujours un des plus zélés défenseurs."

* Lévesque de Burigny : *Vie de M. Bossuet*, p. 96.

Appendix IV. *Notes on Gallicanism*

SIX ARTICLES FORMULATED BY FACULTY OF THEOLOGY ASSEMBLED AT THE SORBONNE, MAY 1663*

I

Ce n'est nullement la doctrine de la Faculté que le souverain Pontife ait aucune autorité sur le temporel des rois.

II

C'est la doctrine de la Faculté que le roi très-chrétien n'a que Dieu au-dessus de lui pour le temporel ; que c'est son ancienne doctrine de laquelle elle ne se départira jamais.

III

Que les sujets du roi lui doivent une fidélité et une obéissance dont ils ne peuvent être dispensés sous quelque prétexte que ce soit.

IV

Que la même Faculté n'approuve et n'a jamais approuvé aucune de ces propositions contraires à l'autorité du roi, aux libertés de l'Église gallicane et aux canons reçus dans le royaume, par exemple, que le Pape peut déposer les évêques contre ces mêmes canons.

V

Que ce n'est pas la doctrine de la Faculté que le Pape soit au-dessus du Concile.

VI

Que ce n'est pas aussi la doctrine de la Faculté que le Pape soit infaillible sans quelque consentement de l'Église.

Gallicanism in 1682

NOTES OF CLAUDE FLEURY ON LAST ACT OF ASSEMBLY OF 1682

(*Nouveaux Opuscules*, pp. 138–140)

Chancellier Le Tellier et archevêque de Rheims avec l'évêque de Meaux en font le projet principalement pour régale. Roi voulut qu'évêque de Meaux en fust. Personnes d'autorité.

* *See* Jourdain : *Hist. de l'Université de Paris*, pp. 220–223.

Question de l'autorité du Pape regardée comme nécessaire à traitter par l'Arch. de R. et son père. On ne la décidera jamais qu'en temps de division. Év. de M. répugnait, hors de saison. Évêque de Tournay voulait la décider. Détourné par év. de M. On augmentera la division que l'on veut éteindre. Beaucoup que le livre de *l'Exposition* ait passé avec approbation. Gardons notre possession. A l'Arch. de R., vous aurez la gloire de l'affaire de la régale qui obscurcie par ces propositions odieuses.

Arch. de Paris—ordre du Roi de traitter cette question. P. Lachaise joint. Pape nous a poussés s'en repentira. Év. de Meaux propose examiner toute la tradition pour pouvoir alonger tant que l'on voudroit. Arch. de Paris dit au Roi que dureroit trop. Ordre de conclure et décider sur l'autorité du Pape. M. Colbert pressoit.

Év. de Tournay chargé dresser les propositions : mal et scolastiquement. Év. de Meaux les dresse, assemblées chez l'Arch. de P. où examinées. Disputes. On voulait y faire mention des appellations au concile. Év. de Meaux résista : ont été nommément condamnées par des bulles de Pie II et Jules II : engagés à Rome à les condamner. Ne reculent jamais. Ne donner prise à condamner nos propositions.

Appendix V. *List of Works Published in the lifetime of Bossuet*

1655 *Réfutation du Catéchisme de Paul Ferry.*
1670 *Oraison Funèbre de la Reine d'Angleterre.*
1670 *Oraison Funèbre de Madame.*
1671 *Exposition de la Doctrine de l'Église catholique.*
1681 *Discours sur l'Histoire universelle.*
1682 *Sermon de l'Assemblée du Clergé.*
1682 *Conférence avec M. Claude.*
1682 *Communion sous les deux espèces.*
1683 *Oraison Funèbre de la Reine.*
1685 *Oraison Funèbre de la Princesse Palatine.*
1686 *Oraison Funèbre de M. Le Tellier.*
1686 *Exposition augmentée.*
1686 *Lettre pastorale aux Nouveaux Catholiques.*
1687 *Catéchisme de Meaux.*
1687 *Oraison Funèbre de M. le Prince.*
1688 *Histoire des Variations* (4 *tomes*).
1689 *L'Apocalypse.*
1689 *Explication de la Messe.*
1689 *Prières ecclésiastiques.*
1689 *Recueil d'Oraisons Funèbres.*
1690 *Pièces et Mémoires sur l'Abbaye de Jouarre.*
1690 *Avertissements aux Protestants.*
1691 *Défense des Variations.*
1691 *Liber Psalmorum.*
1691 *Statuts et Ordonnances synodales.*
1692 *Lettre sur l'Adoration de la Croix.*
1693 *Libri Salomonis.*
1694 *Maximes sur la Comédie.*
1695 *Ordonnance sur l'Oraison.*
1696 *Méditations du Jubilé.*
1697 *Epistolæ quinque Ecclesiæ præsulum* (*contre le Cardinal Sfondrat*).
1697 *États d'Oraison.*
1697 *Declaratio trium episcoporum.*
1697 *Summa doctrinæ.*
1698 *Divers Écrits, etc.*
1698 *Réponse à Quatre Lettres.*
1698 *Relation sur le Quiétisme.*

1698 *Quæstuinculæ.*
1698 *Remarques sur la Réponse.*
1698 *Ordonnance synodale sur la Célébration des Fêtes.*
1699 *Lettre d'un Théologien.*
1699 *Réponses aux préjugés.*
1699 *Passages éclaircis.*
1699 *Mandement pour l'exécution de la bulle contre M. de Cambrai.*
1700 *Première instruction pastorale sur les promesses de l'Église.*
1700 *Quatre écrits latins contre " la probabilité."*
1701 *Seconde instruction pastorale sur l'Église.*
1702 *Méditations sur la rémission des péchés—pour le Jubilé.*
1702 *Ordonnance contre le Nouveau Testament de Trévoux.*
1702 *Instruction sur la version du Nouveau Testament de Trévoux.*
1703 *Seconde instruction, etc.* (*avec une dissertation sur la doctrine de Grotius*).
1704 *Explication d'Isaie vii*, 14, *et du Psaume xxi.*

Appendix VI. Posthumous Publications

1709 *De Institutione Ludovici delphini.*
1709 *Politique tirée de l'Écriture Sainte.*
1709 *Lettre à la Rév. Mère Abbesse et Religieuses de Port Royal.*
1710 *Justification des " Réflexions sur le Nouveau Testament "* (*de Père Quesnel*).
1722 *De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même.*
1727 *Élévations sur les Mystères.*
1730 *Defensio Declarationis.*
1730–1731 *Méditations sur l'Évangile.*
1731 *Traité du Libre Arbitre et de la Concupiscence.*
1737 *Traité de l'amour de Dieu.*
1746 *Lettres spirituelles de Messire J. B. Bossuet à une de ses pénitentes.*
1747 *Abrégé de l'Histoire de France.*

Bossuet reaped no financial advantage from any of his books. He received one hundred copies for presentation. All profits remained with printer. *See* Bourseaud, H. M.: *Hist. des MSS.*, etc., introduction.

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